DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS

Vol. 14, No. 1 Winter 1988

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL FOR DULCIMER ENTHUSIASTS $3.00

Inside:

- *Cambodian Khim Player Bun Loeung*
- *Left Hand Dulcimer Band*
- *Children And Dulcimers*
- *Being Your Own Booking Agent*
- *8 Extra Pages of Arrangements, Club News, How-Tos, Reviews and Much More*

Pope John Paul II

Dulcimer Players News
Vol. 14, No. 1 • Winter 1988
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The *Dulcimer Players News* is published four times each year. Issues are mailed (via 3rd class) to subscribers in January, April, July and October. Subscriptions in the United States are $12 per year, $21 for two years. One year 1st class subscription is $15. Canada: $14 per year. Other countries (surface mail): $14, (air mail - Europe): $16, (air mail - Asia): $18. In the United States a reduced price of $8.25 is available for people who are unable to pay the full subscription price because of financial difficulties. Recent back issues are usually available. Cost per recent issue is $3.73 in the USA (includes postage).

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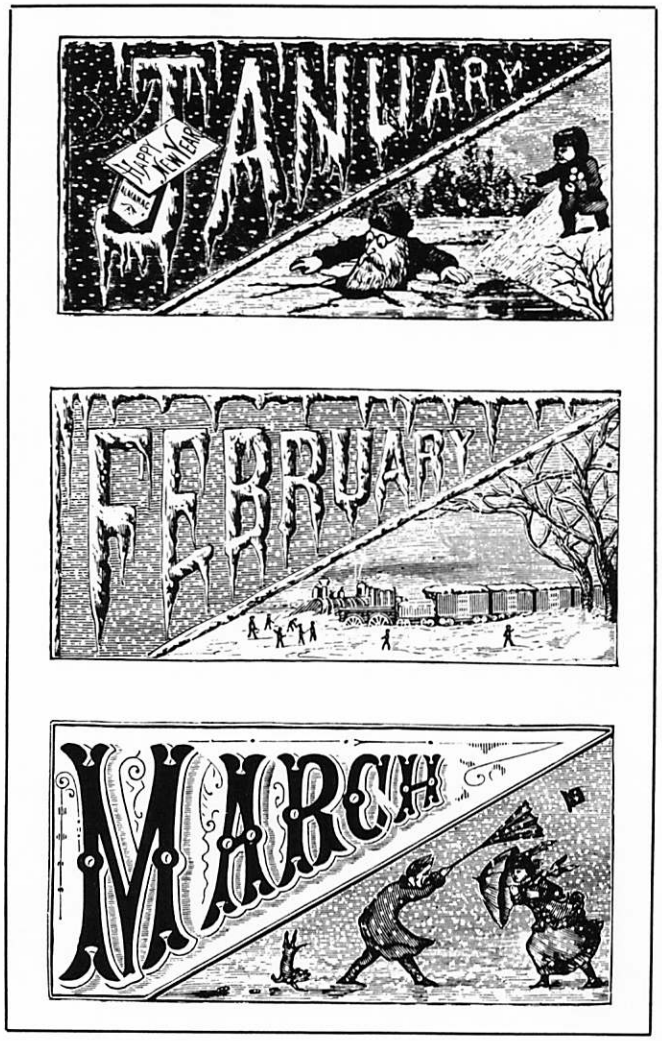
Columnists
Hammer and Fretted Dulcimer Building: **Sam Rizzetta**
Dulcimer Clubs: **Judy Ireton**
Fretted Dulcimer Playing: **Lorraine Lee**
Hammer Dulcimer Playing: **Linda Thompson**
Understanding Music: **Paul Furnas**
What's New and Reviews: **Carrie Crompton**
Music From Europe: **David Moore**

Cover Design: **Jeff Lefkowitz**
Cover Photo: Courtesy of **World Wide Photos**
New York, NY
Subscriptions: **Joan Nauer**

About the cover photo: On September 11, 1987 Pope John Paul II was presented a dulcimer by a student at the home of the president of the University of South Carolina in Columbia.



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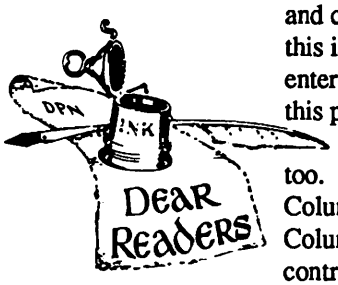

It's time to pat ourselves on the head and celebrate another birthday. With this issue, *Dulcimer Players News* enters Volume 14. We didn't reach this point simply because I gathered information; you made it happen too. Both Sam Rizzetta (The Answer Column) and Judy Ireton (Clubs Column) have mentioned your contributions this time. Thanks!

Once I noticed a birthday celebration for *Sing Out!* upon reaching something like their 30th year. It was amazing to me that a traditional music magazine could not only last that long but grow in quality and scope. Yet, here we are, still growing and enjoying our work. Recently, while entering all of the names and addresses (yet again) into a new computer mailing list program, I had the choice of entering the year as two numbers (87) or four numbers (1987). Someone thought my selection of 1987 instead of 87 very interesting; you see, at the turn of the next century, 00 will read lower than 99 and the computer won't print a label. Are you still with me? If I use four numbers in the date, 2000 will read higher than 1999 and someone (you, perhaps?) will get a label and a current, turn of the century, *Dulcimer Players News.* A friend, noting my optimism for our future, said that by then we'll probably zip things around via personal computer modems. Then you can hear the sound of a dulcimer arrangement in addition to seeing it written. Well, if you stick with us, we'll throw a real celebration for the beginning of Volume 26 in January, 2000.

I want to talk with you about a policy with *Dulcimer Players News.* We do not lend or, especially, sell our mailing list. But, most of you probably want to know of events or gatherings or of someone's wish to get together in a particular community and play music. Soon, perhaps in this issue, renewal slips will have a space for you to indicate whether or not you mind your name and address being shared. I'll then have some kind of category on the computer. It will be our policy to use this privilege sparingly and after consideration. We won't sell your name to land companies or anything!

Some of you are concerned when a friend from the next block receives his/her DPN a week or more before you do. *Every DPN which goes out in the bulk mailing each quarter is mailed on the same day.* There are forms that go with each bulk mailing; it's not a matter of dumping things in the mail box. Sections on the form ask for the weight of a single piece (with five numbers following the decimal point), number of pieces in a pound, and the total weight of the mailing. This is how the post office determines that the correct postage has been paid. I'm going through all of this because some of you believe that DPNs are mailed according to your position in the alphabet or some other way. You must trust me; all DPNs in the bulk mailing are sent from Ann Arbor, Michigan on the same day.

Recently we've received some DPNs back from the post office with a "Forwarding Request Expired" notice on them. These DPNs cost us $2 each to buy back. I don't understand what is happening, since mail is forwarded for a year to a new place, and we pay for address changes from the post office. A year's worth of issues and address changes getting by us seems strange. Perhaps the mail was routinely forwarded and we weren't sent the new addresses by the post office. Finally after several months, the entire journal was sent back with the $2 fee. If you move, check the label on your *Dulcimer Players News* until you see that the new address is used. Let us know if the old address appears more than once.

We're a small operation, and need more attention than *Time* or *Newsweek* staffers do. When you write to us, try to keep separate things in separate envelopes. It's not unusual for someone to ask for advertising information, get a renewal, ask a question for Music Exchange and request information on back issues in the same correspondence. Please put subscription matters in one mailing (or on one piece of paper in the same envelope), DPN editorial matters in another and advertising requests in still another - all with addresses. This is especially important for those of you who are associated with clubs and/or festivals and are sending that information with subscriptions.

Even though I got copy for the fall issue to the printer on time in the latter part of August, they had a press problem, and the issue was about two weeks late in going to subscribers. The printer is wonderful, and most of the time there is no difficulty on their end. But every now and then something is going to happen somewhere, and we won't be able to let you know what's going on before it happens. Just know that rarely are we late getting material to the printer, and even then it's only by 2 or 3 days. After that, our world is dominated by the printer, the mailing house and the post office. The mailing house, a short distance away from the printer in Michigan, gets things out of their hands 3-4 working days after the journals arrive. Then the post office takes over. We try to anticipate any problem by listing festivals and events well in advance so you don't get a new DPN 5 days after something you would have liked to attend has happened. Please remember all of this when you are sending us dated material.

I have one more thing to say before you peruse this issue. Today, November 18th, while taking a DPN break by gathering kindling wood and enjoying yet again all of the birds that love our yard, I thought of those among us who, for whatever reason, cannot experience the full sweetness of freedom. There are people confined to their beds or in nursing homes or in places where the struggles to learn and even survive are almost overwhelming. You have shared music with so many of these people, and that is a big reason why I love being one of the scribes who hold us in communication. I've heard it said more than once, "What a world this would be if everyone sat down together and shared milk and cookies in the afternoon." I think that all of us singing and playing musical instruments together would be as good as milk and cookies! I know of you who walk and sing and play music in the search for peace. I recognize your efforts and thank you for them. I want the DPN to continue to be one of your musical voices. Perhaps 1988 will bring us even closer in our quest.

In harmony,

Madeline MacNeil, Editor
DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS

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Designer Builder Player

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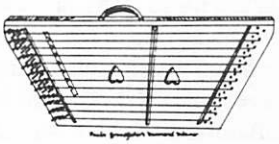

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Transcribed by Jean Lewis

Cost of book: $8.95
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Jean Lewis
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Letters To Us

Dear DPN:

A spelling checker may eliminate the dulcimer "palyers" but it won't eliminate mis-typed addresses. The address for Pete Benson and The Classical Hammered Dulcimer Association is 7505-D Weatherworn Way, Columbia, MD 21046, not 7005 as in the fall DPN.

There will always be work for proofreaders no matter how hi-tech publishing gets.

Diane Alberga
State College, PA

Dear DPN:

Thanks so much for putting the announcement about workshop leaders for the 12th Annual Cranberry Dulcimer Gathering, July 22-24, 1988. My address, for those interested in conducting hammered dulcimer workshops, is 138 Old Haverstraw Road, Congers, NY 10920, not 128 Haverstraw. Deadline is Feb. 1st.

Steve Schneider
Congers, NY

Dear DPN:

Many thanks to you and all the readers who so quickly responded to my request (in the Music Exchange column) for the cross-stitch pattern. A very special "thank you" goes to Doris Bush who so generously parted with her pattern, knowing that it is now out of print, in order that I could have it.

Karen Cameron
West Olive, MI

Congratulation to...

...Lynn Wosilait, fretted dulcimer player from Columbia, Missouri. She received Missouri's cultural heritage apprenticeship to a master dulcimer player with funding by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Missouri Arts Council. Lynn has played for about 6 years and likes to arrange music for the dulcimer.

Music Exchange

The Music Exchange column is for people trying to find arrangements of favorite songs and tunes, and sources of old music remembered from childhood. It can also include requests for out-of-print albums, musical accessories and anything else applicable to this journal. There is no charge for listings. **Please Note:** It is very important that readers responding to these requests send copies of the information to Dulcimer Players News so we can share with other readers. Answers and questions are always welcome.

Answers

"Chinese Breakdown" and "Joys Of Quebec" can be found in *The Fiddler's Fakebook* by David Brody, Oak Publications, 1983. The exclusive distributor in this country is listed as Music Sales Corporation, 24 East 22nd St., New York, NY 10010.

Janet Williams
Hartsdale, NY

I learned "Joys of Quebec" from a friend who plays it on fiddle and says he learned it from a record. It is published in *The Fiddlecase Book Of 101 Polkas* by Jack Perron and Randy Miller, Fiddlecase Books, Harrisville, NY 03450.

Ed Hale
N. Little Rock, AR

I wrote a card to Rosemary Jamison telling her to contact Judy Domeny, a very fine singer from Rt. 4, Box 292, Rogersville, MO 65742 for "Two Little Boys." Judy sang it on her album *Calling Me Back,* a very nice album.

Bill Spencer
New Lebanon, OH

Last summer I purchased a music program recommended to me by Paul Sechrist. The name of the package is

Songwright III Plus. It is for IBM and IBM compatibles and you must have one of the following printers: IBM matrix, Epson, Star or Proprinter. There are really two packages, the Songwright III at $49.95 and the Plus version at $74.95 which includes Songwright III and Encore, an enhancement package.

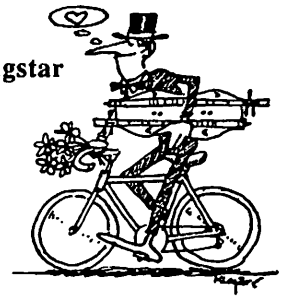
With Songwright III, you can compose up to two voices per staff plus harmony notes in your choice of treble, bass or alto clef, play it right back (but only one note at a time through your speaker), connect the staffs, write in up to 4 lines of lyrics, add chords, transpose notes and chords and print it out in fairly easy to read print.

The Encore package, which I highly recommend, allows you to play your keyboard like an instrument. I haven't had the time to fool around with this tool yet as it *is* like learning a new instrument. It also more importantly allows you to look at, play your composition as a whole and move pieces of music around. I use it a lot to insert dummy bars at the end of a line, enabling me to enlarge the piece at the copier.

The only drawback I've found is that if you print 4 sixteenth notes at the end of the measure, it spills into the next measure. But it is still easy to read. Also, it only plays back single notes at a time (no chords).

The author of this neat program is Michael Hulett. He includes easy to follow and humorous instruction and has a clever sample entitled banner to let you hear it play right away. The address for the program is Songwright III, Route 1, Box 83, Lovettsville, VA 22080. 703/822-9068.

Judi Morningstar
Pontiac, MI

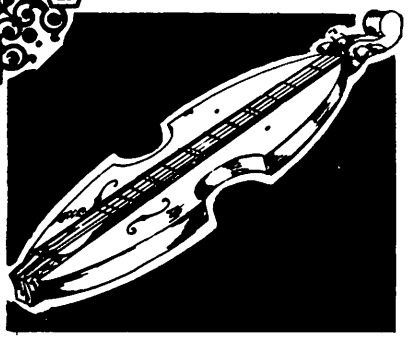


Questions

I am seeking more verses than one to "Angelina Baker." Are there more verses?
Melvin Little
924 20th Street South
Arlington, VA 22202

Way back when I was a little girl, I can remember my mother singing a song to me that sticks in my mind. I cannot remember the words, but I do remember the melody pretty well. She is gone now, and I very much would like words and music to the song. She said the title was "Rocking Alone In An Old Rocking Chair." Another song is "Springtime In The Rockies." These two bring back many good memories.

I also would like to know if there is a tape or book available to teach fingerpicking the lap dulcimer.
Rosalie Hempfling
7775 T. 94
Findlay, OH 45840



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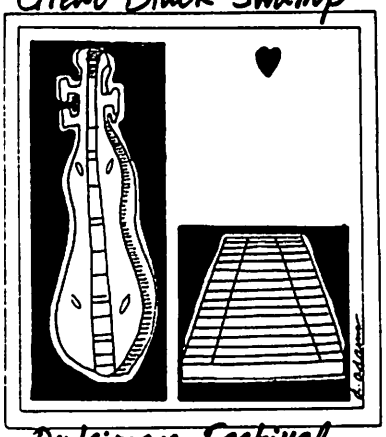
Great Black Swamp



Dulcimer Festival

April 29-30, May 1, 1988

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1988 Events Calendar

February - early May

The Events Calendar is an early sign of spring. The events listed below will help you plan your calendar through early May. The April issue of Dulcimer Players News will feature a calendar of events through September. Please send us information about festivals and gatherings of interest to dulcimer players and traditional music enthusiasts no later than February 10th. This is a firm deadline. We want to help spread the word.

Feb. 26-28 • near Dayton, OH
The **Winter Get Together** features jamming and nightly concerts put on by members of nearby dulcimer clubs. Info: Judy Liesch, 513/293-7877.

April 17 • Dennis, MS
Dulcimer Day, featuring performances, jam sessions and sales booths, is sponsored by the Ala-Sippi Dulcimer Association. Held at Tishomingo State Park. Info: Hollis Long, Box 76, Golden, MS 38847.

April 19-22/22-24 • Elkins, WV
A **Dulcimer Week** and **Dulcimer Festival** are being planned by the Augusta Center. They will include in-depth workshops, dances and concerts. Info: Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241. 304/636-1903. **See ad.**

April 22-24 • Mt. View, AR
The Ozark Folk Center's **Spring Dulcimer Convention** features fretted and hammer dulcimer contests, workshops and concerts. Info: Dulcimer Convention, Ozark Folk Center, Mt. View, AR 72560. 501/269-3851.

April 29-May 1 • Lima, OH
The **10th Great Black Swamp Dulcimer Festival** will be held indoors at Ohio State University, Lima Campus. Concerts, workshops of all kinds, open stage and jamming. Info: Susan Porter, The Ohio State Un., 4240 Campus Dr., Lima, OH 45804. 419/228-2641, ext. 254. **See ad.**

April 30-May 1 • Birmingham, AL
The Southern Appalachian Dulcimer Association's **15th Annual Dulcimer Festival** will be held at the museum in Tannehill State Park near Birmingham and Bessemer. Jamming, program and sales booth. Info: Levis Barton, 2549 Altadena Forest Circle, Birmingham, AL 35243.

May 6-8 • Glen Rose, TX
The **7th Lone Star State Dulcimer Festival**, held at Oakdale Park, will feature contests for mountain and hammer dulcimer players, arts and crafts fair, workshops and concerts. Info: Dana Hamilton, 904 Houston, Arlington, TX 76012. 817/275-3872.

May 7 • Watertown, MA
The **7th Annual Flower Carol Dulcimer Festival** will feature workshops and an evening concert honoring the hammer and fretted ducimers and the voice. Held at the Palfrey Street School in Watertown (Boston area). Info: 56 Oxford Ave., Belmont, MA 02178. 617/484-2971.

May 14-15 • Rogersville, AL
The **First Creek Dulcimer Day Festival** features open stage, workshops, performance, jam sessions, pot luck supper, camping and fellowship and fun. Info: Robbie Robbins, 24 Harborview Ct., NE, Decatur, AL 35601. 205/355-4813.

May 21-22 • Clarksburg, MD
The **5th Annual Spring Dulcimer Family Weekend**, held at Little Bennett Regional Park, features workshops in hammered dulcimer, fretted dulcimer, Autoharp, banjo and band plus jams, shape note singing and open stage. Info: Fred Bird, 419 Park Rd., Rockville, MD 20850. 301/279-7928.

Do not forget to send us information about gatherings and festivals for 1988 no later than February 10th. Firm deadline.

Bun Loeung
Khim player from Cambodia
by Stu Janis
Maplewood, Minnisota

Shortly after moving to the Twin Cities in 1984 I visited the Science Museum of Minnesota. As I walked through the building I heard sounds very much like a hammered dulcimer, but the music was unlike anything I had heard before. Upon further investigation I found a Cambodian ensemble playing in the museum for the Asian Heritage Festival, and one of the musicians, Bun Loeung, was playing a hammered dulcimer, known in Cambodian as the khim. I watched in fascination as he played, gliding quickly and effortlessly from one octave tremolo to the next, displaying ease and agility with his hammers I had not seen in American dulcimists. Soon after I began watching, the performance came to an end.

I did not have an opportunity to speak with him then, but about a year later I contacted Loeung about taking lessons and learning some Cambodian music, and quickly discovered he does not speak English. Fortunately, his daughters, Saroum and Sarin, and his niece, Vanna Ouk, were able to serve as translators during my visits, and I was able to learn some tunes, and get to know a very interesting family. In August 1986, Dick Hensold, a Twin Cities Northumbrian smallpiper and recorder player who has performed with Loeung, and I spent five hours with the Bun family. What follows is a summary of our conversations.

Photo by Dick Hensold

Bun Loeung was born in Cambodia's second largest city, Battambang, in the western part of the country on May 5, 1929. At age 14, he began playing the tro, a Cambodian two-stringed violin (similar to a Chinese er hu). Ten years later, after noting a lack of skilled khim players in the country, he taught himself to play, and over the years has also learned khloy (similar to a pennywhistle), roneat (marimba), khong wong (circle of gongs), samphor (drum), banjo, clarinet and saxophone.

While living in pre-war Cambodia, Loeung played for many functions. His first musical job and primary interest was playing for a traveling theatre group which performed lakhoun basak, a theatre form from the part of Cambodia near the Viet Nam border. (Lakhoun means without masks, and basak is a tributary of the Mekong river.) Loeung's father was the director of the theatre, a job which Loeung later took on. A typical performance lasted five hours, after which the troupe would move on to the next city. In addition to lakhoun basak, Loeung played at weddings, and occasionally for the

royal family. He also taught music.

Perhaps his most unusual jobs involved playing for wealthy Cambodian drug users. The patrons would hire him to play from 11 p.m. until sunrise while they smoked opium. In these situations he usually played quiet soothing music to lull the people to sleep, so he, too, could get a rest. After a few hours they would awaken, and he would play some more, a pattern which continued until dawn.

Loeung served as a musician in the Cambodian army on two occasions, first from 1955-1958, and again in 1970. The war had reached Cambodia during his second stint, and although Loeung was a musician, he was trained as a soldier and sent to Viet Nam. He could not support his family while in Viet Nam, and his age made it difficult to adapt to army life, so he left the military in 1971.

Upon returning to civilian life, he and his wife, Vin Kong, opened a grocery store in the city of Saraisapoan, which they ran until 1975. Loeung played some music during this period, but not much lakhoun basak, since the war made it difficult to travel, and the government could not guarantee safety for people attending night-time performances of plays.

In 1975 the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia. They led a vicious government, forcibly evacuating cities with as little as two days notice, and allowing people to take only what they could carry since no cars, motorcycles or buses were permitted. The Khmer Rouge's intent was to erase thousands of years of feudalism and start Cambodian history at year 0. Hence, lakhoun basak was forbidden, as were all other reminders of Cambodian culture.

The Khmer Rouge also assassinated intellectuals and teachers. Loeung was a music teacher, but was able to escape assassination by playing for Khmer Rouge propaganda plays. Even then he was not safe; on more than one occasion he was taken away to be killed. However, Loeung was the only person in the ensemble who knew all the parts to the music, and the musicians could not maintain cohesiveness without his leadership. Thus he was able to survive until the Vietnamese overthrew the Khmer Rouge and installed a puppet government in 1979, at which time the Bun family fled to Thailand. They remained in a Thailand refugee camp until 1982, when they arrived in St. Paul, their current home.

As in western culture there are many different kinds of Cambodian music, and Loeung plays music from each of the traditional forms. Mahori, pin peat and phleng kar, as well as lakhoun basak are popular among Cambodians. The music is based on a pentatonic scale, although fourths and sevenths are used occasionally.

Mahori is Cambodian classical music, long pieces usually played for governors, royalty and educated city residents. As an army musician, Loeung played and taught mahori music. At other times, when Loeung toured the countryside playing mahori music for farmers and peasants, his ensemble often played shortened versions of the pieces to prevent the audience from becoming bored.

Pin Peat is classical dance music. There is a long tradition of classical dance in Cambodia, with some of the dances dating back over 1000 years. Pin peat uses different instruments than mahori, and while mahori music can be played well using pin peat instruments, pin peat music played with mahori instrumentation tends to sound like mahori music.

Another kind of traditional Cambodian music is phleng kar, which is played at weddings. Cambodian weddings can be very large affairs lasting up to three days.

Loeung has memorized about 40 of the long classical pieces, and at one time knew a total of about 500 tunes. Since he has been out of the country, he has forgotten some them, and now guesses that he can remember 200-300 Cambodian tunes. This includes, in addition to the formalized music discussed above, Cambodian folk, and rock 'n' roll music. Since moving to America, he has learned some western tunes as well, and has closed concerts with "Auld Lang Syne", albeit played with a Cambodian accent.

The khim found its way to Cambodia through Cina and is very similar to the Chinese yang chin. There are two sizes of khim, the khim touc (small khim), which has a range similar to most American dulcimers, and khim thom (large khim), with a range one octave lower than khim touc.

Loeung owns a khim touc, which was made by Sreuy Yeoung in the refugee camp in Tahiland. His instrument has seven treble and seven bass courses. The treble bridge has fifth interval tuning, and the bass is a seventh lower, although sometimes it is a major seventh and sometimes a minor seventh. Loeung tunes his highest bass bridge to B-flat, as opposed to the B used by most khim players, to give him more flexibility with accidentals. He would like some day to have a chromatic khim, with courses spaced at intervals of a half step.

Loeung's khim has two strings per course on the treble bridge, and three on the bass. This layout is common among khims, although some have three strings per course on the treble bridge, too.

The soundboard of Loeung's instrument is made of a light wood called sroll (mahogany), the frame is a darker wood, the name of which Loeung cannot recall, and his bridges are bone. Loeung has individual bridges on his khim, but some have one piece bridges. There is no bracing inside the khim; the interior is completely hollow, and over time the soundboard has become warped, which, Loeung says, actually improves the sound.

Cambodian hammers are called ang long and are long, thin, very flexible pieces of bamboo, with the head of the hammer at the node of the wood. Loeung has two sets of hammers, one with wood heads, the other with heads wrapped in string or rubber bands, providing an effect similar to the leather hammers used by many American dulcimists.

The flexibility of the hammers allows for the most distinctive feature of Loeung's playing, namely rapid tremolos. His tremolos are individual hammer strikes (as opposed to buzzes), and he uses his middle fingers as pivots to keep the hammering motion going. The tremolos cover a wide variety of intervals, and he often changes to a different interval in mid-tremolo.

A typical example would be starting with an octave (see Figure 1). His left hammer will play e''' on the left side of the treble bridge, and the right hammer will play e'' on the right side. After a very brief period, he will move his right hammer to g'' on the left side of the treble bridge to end with a major sixth interval. Another example (see Figure 2) would be a tremolo starting with g''- e'' across the treble bridge, and moving his right hammer across to e' on the bass bridge.

According to Loeung, very few khim players use this type of tremolo

Figure 1

Figure 2

throughout a piece, instead just playing octave tremolos at the ends of phrases. Since Loeung is self-taught he developed this style on his own.

Loeung also credits his hammers with allowing him to play without looking at his instrument. (He told me this allows him to greet customers when they walk into restaurants.) When he plays, the khim is tilted away from him so the soundboard is facing out. With his hammers so flexible, they simply hang down, and with the feel he has developed for the bridge spacing, he does not need to see the strings. Tilting the instrument away from him also allows the sound to go more toward the audience.

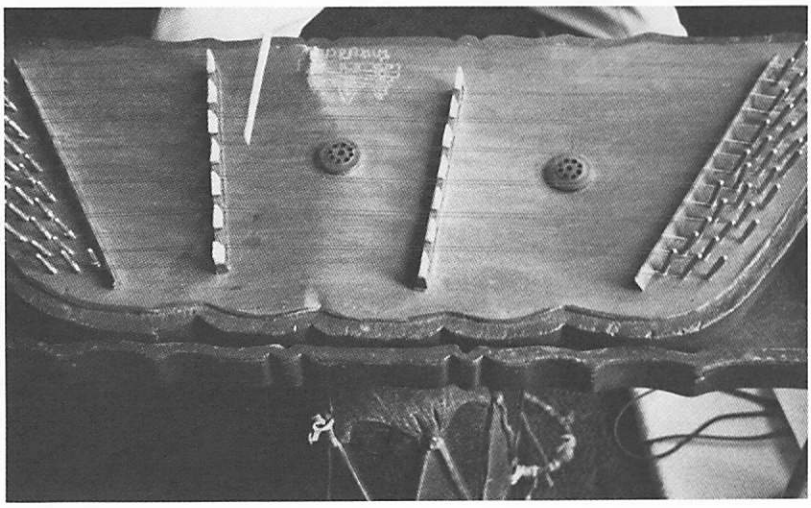
Loeung has not seen many American dulcimer players, but this does not prevent him from being able to play American instruments. (He did attend a John McCutcheon concert in Minneapolis once and, needless to say, liked what he heard and saw.) When I visited him with my 18-17 Lee Spears concert grand, he played it with no difficulty, even expanding the range of the tunes to take advantage of the larger range of my dulcimer.

Today Loeung plays at weddings and occasional lakhoun basak performances. He is the leader of the Khmer Mahori Ensemble that plays traditional Cambodian, as well as western music, at various events in Minnesota, including a recent opening of The King And I, A Taste Of Minnesota, and the Red Wing Arts Festival. He has also been the house musician at a Cambodian restaurant in Minneapolis.

Working through Traditional Historic and Ethnic Arts (T.H.E.A.), and its director, Cliff Sloane, Loeung was awarded a Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship in music in 1986, one of four chosen from over 300 applicants. The fellowship provides financial support so he can give lessons and pass his knowledge of traditional music to other Cambodians. T.H.E.A. is also supporting the Khmer Mahori Ensemble's application for listing and funding with the Arts Midwest Touring Catalog.

A cassette tape of Loeung's music, *Cambodian Traditional Music In Minnesota,* was recorded at New Year's parties in 1982 and 1983. The tape, which was chosen by the Library of Congress as one of the best folklife recordings of 1984, is available for $8 from World Music Enterprises, 717 Avondale, Canton, OH 44240.

Stu Janis is a dulcimer player and teacher living in St. Paul, Minnesota. In real life he's a statistician with 3M.



The design on the instrument is the Angkor Temple in Cambodia. *Photo • Dick Hensold*

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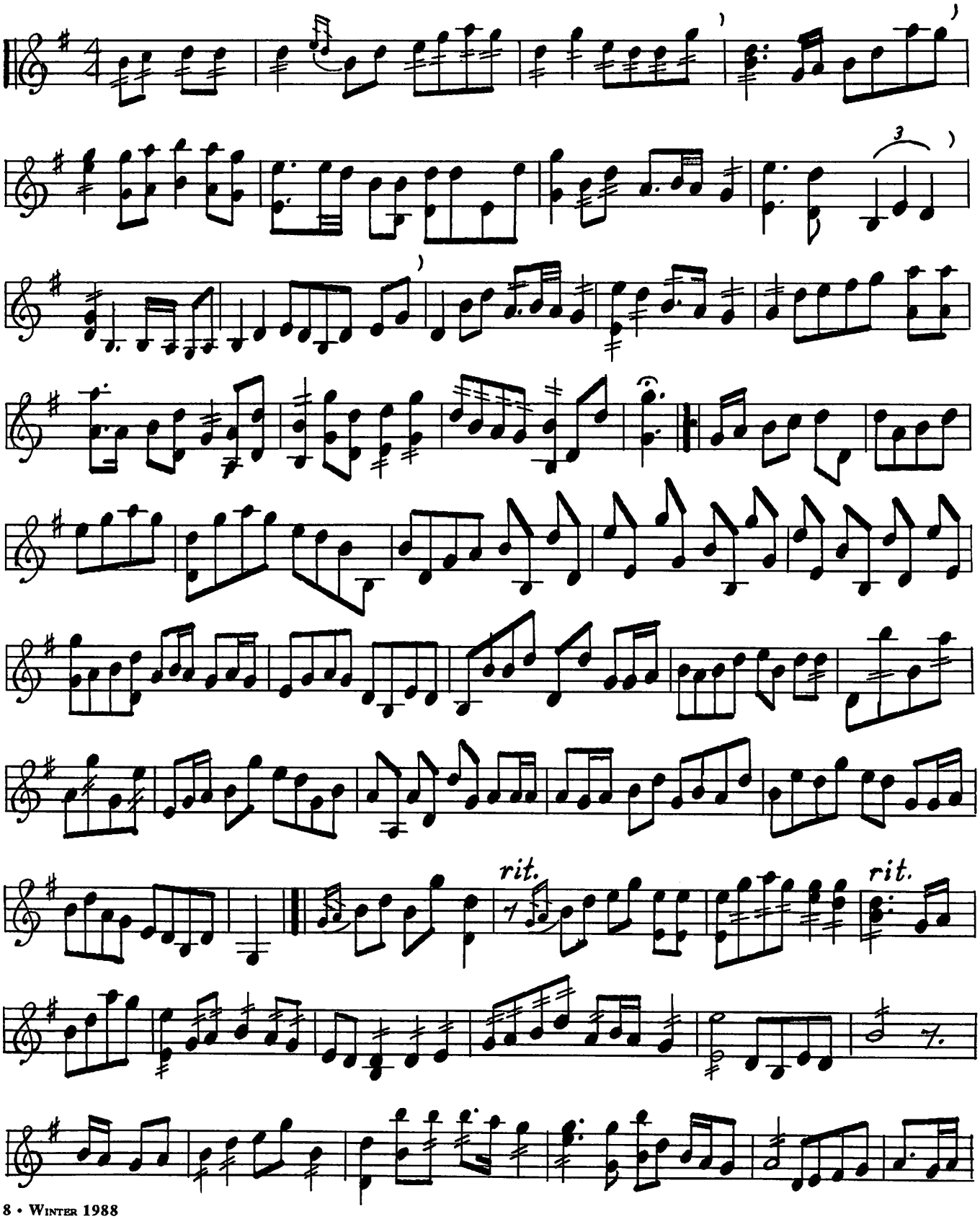

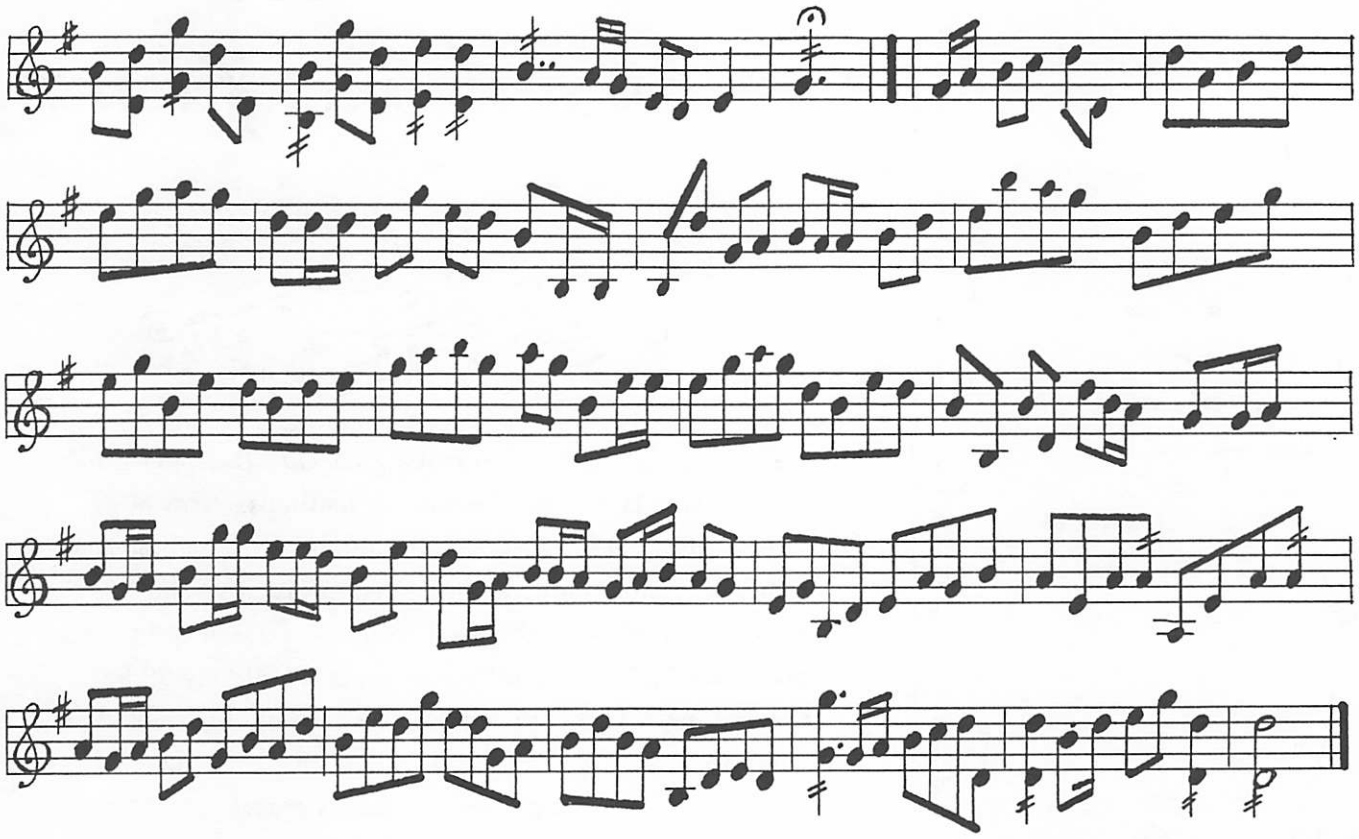

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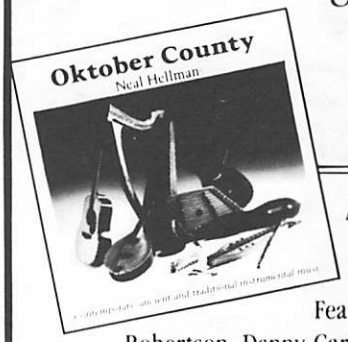

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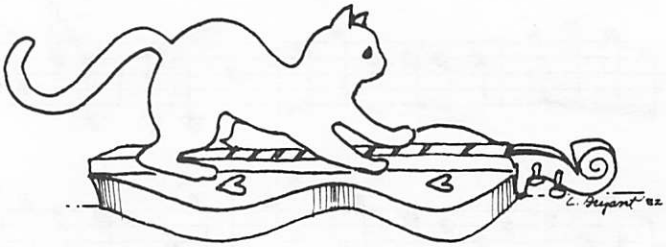
Thanks, dulcimer friends!



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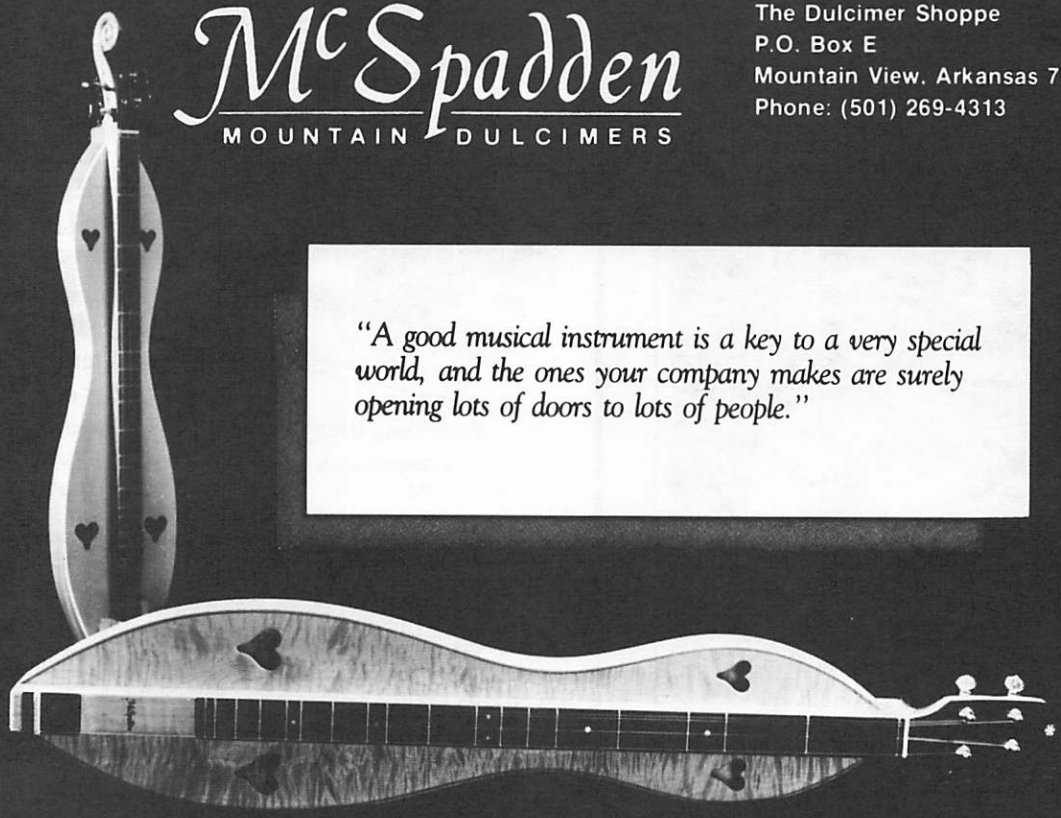

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Dulcimer Clubs Column
Edited by Judy Ireton

This is the season of the year I have always loved. The holidays are past, yard work is unnecessary, and it gets dark very early. I feel safely surrounded in the cocoon of my own home. I take one evening each week out of my hectic schedule and allow it to be all mine. This is my very special time. The wood burner radiates a warmth not unlike that of the many campfires we sat around this summer with many of you. It is a special time for remembering as I again play the tunes we shared. It is a time for writing notes and sometimes lengthy letters to those of you we have been fortunate to meet. It is a time for reading every word of the special magazines I enjoy. Try it a few weeks. I am only able to manage about three hours of this wonderful luxury, but it has allowed me to learn many new tunes and keep in touch with those whose friendship means so much. I feel I have earned my special time and encourage you to try it.

I was amazed and ever so pleased at the response I received to my last column. More of you wrote about starting a new club than have ever written about the clubs to which you belong. Two comments in the column precipitated the most response: "Don't worry about presidents or Roberts Rules of Order or formats" and "Your main interest should be in finding a group of people who will enjoy getting together to share their music." It was stated several times that the purpose of forming a club should be determined and stated from the beginning. It was felt that a club should not be started as an outlet for one individual's performances or to add a title after someone's name. Dulcimer clubs should be for playing and promoting the music of these unique instruments and that the formats for most social type clubs should be left to those groups who have this as their foremost goal. One letter stated, "*Please* keep encouraging simplicity!" Another stated, "When the fun and enjoyment of music became shadowed with officers/regulations/politics, the joy and contentment diminished rapidly." Still another states, "There are so few dulcimer clubs in the country and so many social clubs, emphasize to your readers how important it is just to get together and have fun playing, and playing, and playing..." The tone of the letters seems to be, in each case, get together and play, learn more about the instruments. Have fun, and let other organizations worry about formalities.

From Everett Traylor, Bettendorf, Iowa, came some excellent suggestions. First, he suggested using lists of people dulcimer builders have sold instruments to. He made a very valid point. "Many new dulcimers are played a little at first but are put on a shelf because the buyer doesn't know other players nearby." He realizes this would mean some extra work for builders, but points out that this might also mean further business. This might create too much paper work for the person who would have to make some type of compilation of this information for dissemination, but I throw it out to all of you builders. Would you be interested in doing this? I would be happy to send any builder a list of the clubs nearest to them. Taking Everett's Idea, in a slightly different direction, it would be an excellent idea for each club to contact all builders in their area and provide them with information on their group, stating meeting place, time, a map and a welcome to newcomers. He felt it would be helpful for all builders to provide *Dulcimer Players News* flyers with each instrument they sell, for "many persons that own dulcimers do not know about the *Dulcimer Players News*." As an aside, he stated he might consider giving complimentary subscriptions at some time in the future with the sale of his "top of the line instruments." What a wonderful way to help beginners get off to a good start. They would be able to see from the beginning what is available in the "Dulcimer Kingdom."

From one of our eastern friends came the suggestion, "If you want to start a club, find a park or nursing home or any place where the public gathers. Sit down and play for several hours; the rest will take care of itself." Now that appeals to my simplistic approach towards life. Let things just happen.

A special thanks to those who took time to drop me a note with your ideas. Please let me hear from more of you.

From the Central Kentucky Hammered Dulcimer Club and Bob Wyatt came another fine newsletter with the Playing Tip of the Month: Octave harmonics on the hammered dulcimer. I had never heard of doing this, so headed immediately to my hammered dulcimer to try it out. It works! "The trick is to hit the note with the right hammer while simultaneously touching the same strings very lightly with your left hand pinky finger at a point about half the length of the string from the tuning pin nut to the bridge." He points out that you will have to experiment to find the right point and that it works best to the left side of the treble bridge. If you do not play a chromatic hammered dulcimer, this will allow you to play those elusive notes.

The Silver Strings Dulcimer Society held a "hammer-makin' nite" which involved cotton balls, Q-tips and rubber bands. Ethel said she would "Put this cotton on my pick and be a 'cotton-picker'." She felt that using the rubber bands was "Stretching it a bit." They must have all had a fun evening. Rose also sent a small write-up on several new performing groups in their club: Downriver Michigan Dulcimer Jubilee, Papala, and Woodsong.

From the Peninsula Mountain Dulcimer Society came my first newsletter. Tell us more about "Alpha Centauri." According to Robin Mohun, this is going to be the song of the 80's.

In the last newsletter I mentioned Michigan Friends of Traditional Music

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and Dance. Actually, I did not have their full name correct, and Gail Schwandt was nice enough to respond and fill me in on this new organization. It is less than one year old and has 24 families in membership. They do not consider themselves a dulcimer club, but welcome all folk musicians. They meet at 7:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month at alternate locations. Even months (February, April, etc.) at the United Methodist Church on Main Street in Flushing, Michigan; other months in Chesaning, Michigan at the United Methodist Church on West M-57. They welcome other musicians as well as listeners.

From Marji Hazen and Jerry Rockwell comes news of the Central Ohio Dulcimer Learning exchange. They state their purpose as not necessarily becoming a club, but an exchange of information for students and teachers. They held their first meeting at the Whetstone Recreational center in Columbus, Ohio.

Also from Columbus, Ohio came a copy of "Strings 'n' Stuff, the newsletter of the Columbus Dulcimer Society. Some of their members had performed for the opening of a very large new department store in the area.

A special welcome to the New York City Mountain Dulcimer Society. Linda Hall says she has but four members and is looking for more. There are at least two who have written to me, LInda, and I am sure many more exist. Linda can be contacted at the address at the end of the column. Let us know how you started gathering people in the Big Apple.

Congratulations to the Detroit Country Dance Society on their Tenth Anniversary. Also, congratulations to Margie and Greg Mirken of Shade Tree Music in Mission Viejo, California. Their new daughter, Jeanette was born July 28th and joins Sally Mirken to make this family a quartet.

From Susie Hutchison comes the schedule for the Lexington Folk Singing Group. They will meet January 8, February 5, March 4, April 8, May 6 and June 11. They do not meet during the summer. Meetings are held at 7:45 in individuals' homes. Contact Susie at 502/863-6533 if you are interested.

Lloyd Beckett sends information on several dulcimer groups that meet under the able leadership of Mary Knight. One meets at the Senior Citizens Center in

West Jefferson, Ohio at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesdays. A second group meets in Columbus, Ohio at the Marion Square Senior Citizens Center. If you're interested, contact the centers for specifics.

The Orange County (California) Folk Music Club meets the second Sunday of each month. A song circle is held from 4-7 p.m. with a potluck and jamming afterwards. Contact Amy at 714/557-3486 for further information.

From Evvy Nichols comes news of yet another new club, the Sawmill Dulcimer players. They meet in Cook Forest at the Saw Mill. Along with the announcement of the new club came a flyer fro Sawmill Dulcimer Days to be held next September. That is quite an undertaking for a new group.

Now, to end this column I must(?) pass on information titled "Official Notice Top Secret" from Michigan. A select group meets "sporadically once a month" on the 3rd and 4th Thursday afternoons. That is, except when they meet in the evening. All meetings are preceded by a strategy meeting in a local restaurant and then they wend their way to a member's home. Each member signs in with three songs that the member is prepared to lead. Meetings are held with no idle chit chat as this is a most serious gathering. All instruments are tuned upon arrival, or the possessor is banished to a room to ponder her sins and retune. Members come from any cities and even several states to join this elite group known as The Ladies Dulcimer and Terrorist Society. Visitors are welcome, but Natah Mahri forewarns that one should be prepared to be terrified. She claims most of their victims to be small children and animals, but I can personally report on having been terrorized at the Great Black Swamp Festival. If you wish to attend, passwords may be gotten from Natah Mahri at 313/681-1688 or Remiclud at 313/887-9067 or Natasha at 313/652-2948. Do not take such a visit lightly. This is a very serious group. "Hell hath no vengence like a woman scorned." William Congreve.

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast." William Congreve, *The Mourning Bride*, Act I, scene 1 1697.

New Clubs

Sawmill Dulcimer Players
Route 2, Box 84-B
Pulaski, PA 16143

Clarion Dulcimer Club
Sally Ringland
RD 2, Box 176
Clarion, PA 16214

Peninsula Mountain Dulcimer Society
P.O. Box 3775
Redwood City, CA 94064

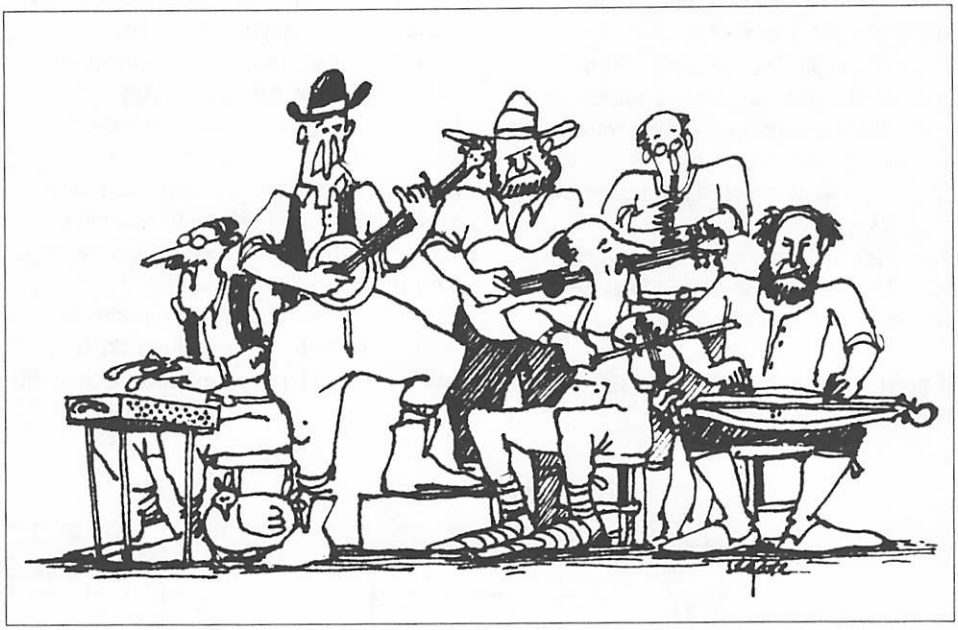
New York City Mt. Dulcimer Society
Linda Hall
515 Minnieford Ave.
City Island, NY 10464

Michigan Friends of Trad. Music & Dance
427 N. Line St.
Chesaning, MI 48616

Central OH Dulcimer Learning Exchange
P.O. Box 14111
Columbus, OH 43214

Raleigh Hammered Dulcimer Club
Dan Gilvary
605 Riverview Dr.
Raleigh, NC 27610
919/833-2373

Judy Ireton, Clubs Column Editor
6865 S. Scarff Rd.
New Carlisle, OH 45344



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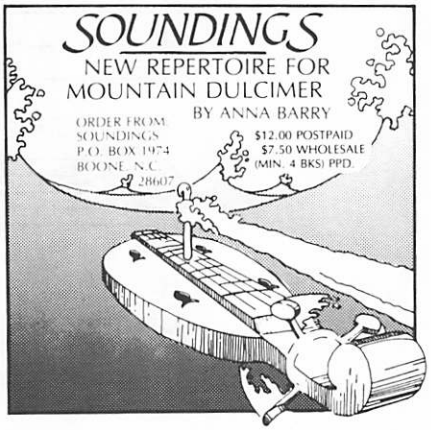


Hammer Dulcimer Column

Linda Lowe Thompson

Adding Bass Notes To Your Tunes

I very much like adding lower notes to basic melodies. They add wonderful texture and "oomph" to the music.

How To Fit Them In:

1. When you've got a bit of time—perhaps at the end of a phrase or when a note is held for a relatively long time. (example 1)
2. Instead of a melody note. (example 2).
3. Add to a basic drone. (example 3)
4. Play melody with left, bass notes with right. (example 4).

If needed, use the G tab chart, fall 1986 DPN.

How To Execute:

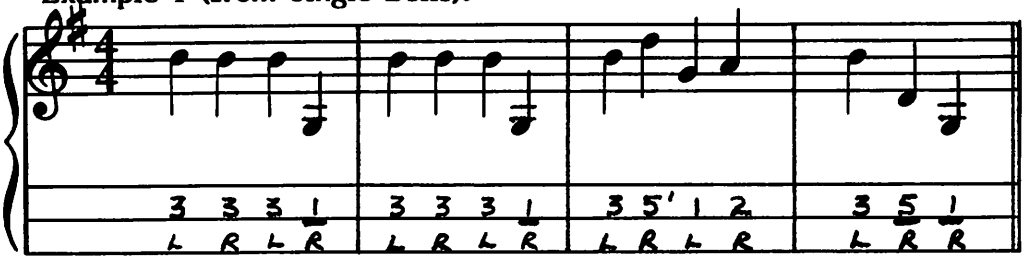
Isn't that a great word to use when discussing the playing of music? I once read that good musicians execute music, bad ones simply murder it! Anyhow, learn to hit bass notes without looking. Play the examples and force yourself not to watch when you're hitting the lower notes on the bass bridge. Believe me, your ear will tell you when you're wrong. You'll quickly get more skillful. This will help greatly in expanding your capabilities on dulcimer—as you get more skillful, you'll need to have your hands able to do some things without eye assistance.

What Note Do You Play?

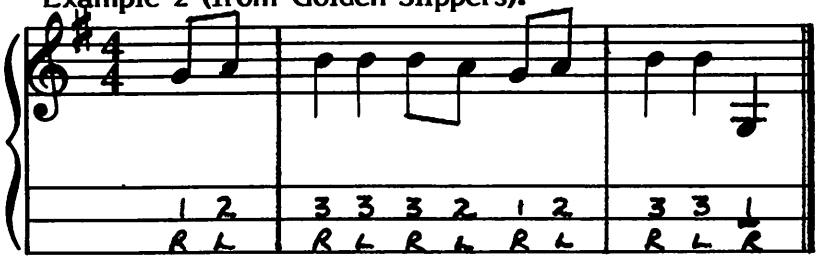
Figure out what chord you're playing. Obviously, that's easier with music that has suggested chords printed with the music. (They're usually just above the staff.) This article's examples are in a key with 1 sharp (#) as its signature. In traditional music, the chords most often seen in tunes with that signature are:

G	G, B, D
D	D, F#, A
C	C, E, G
Em	E, G, B
F	F, A, C
Am	A, C, E

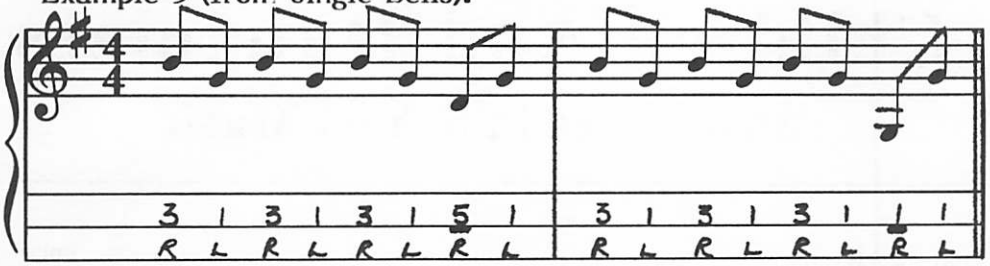
Example 1 (from Jingle Bells):



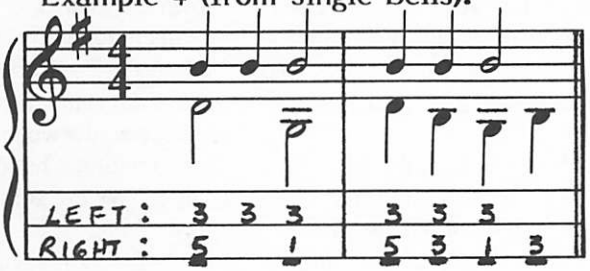
Example 2 (from Golden Slippers):



Example 3 (from Jingle Bells):



Example 4 (from Jingle Bells):



If the chord you're playing is G, choose a bass note(s) from G, B, and D. If the chord is Em, choose the bass note(s) from E, G, and B etc., Etc., etc. (When you see Em, read it as "E minor." A capital letter standing alone is understood to be major. If someone says or writes "G" it means G major.)

Now—

Incorporate this into your own playing. Figure out places this works in your current repertoire. Train yourself to consider this in future repertoire.

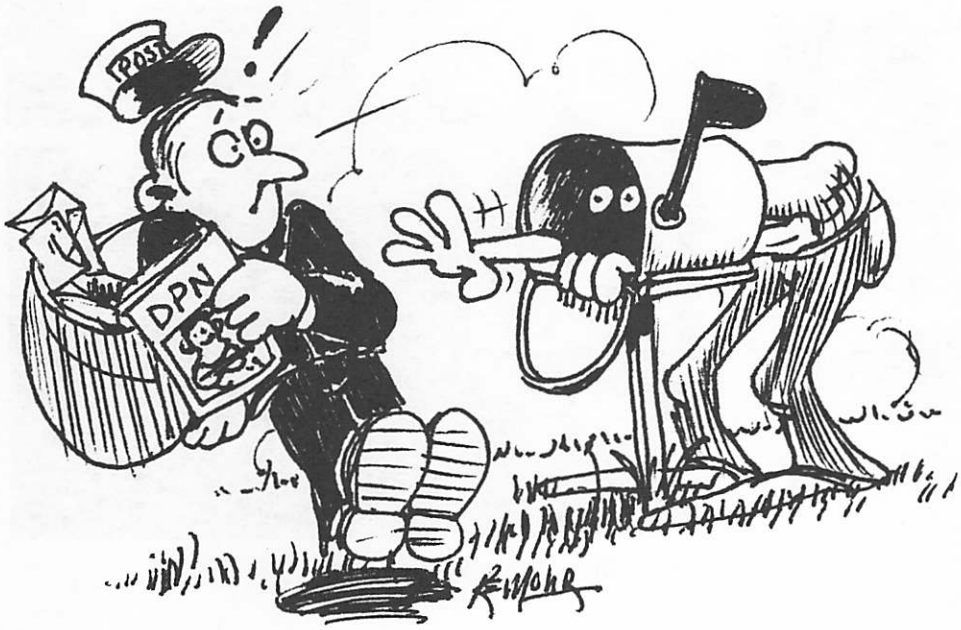
Performance Tips From Lilah Gillett

Lilah is a lovely and talented woman who lives in Overland Park, Kansas. You often read of her and her work in DPN.

"The following idea has always made me feel at ease, and I pass it on to all my students, who have also found it helpful. Whenever I am going to perform, I always try to arrive in plenty of time so that after I'm all set up, there is still time to visit with several people, learn something about them, their interests and the locality. In this way, they become more than strangers in a crowd—they become that important element upon which I build an active rapport with the audience."

As you know, I'm including performance tips in my DPN articles. Do you have some that have not yet been included? Also, I'm collecting practice tips from dulcimists. Any suggestions?

I hope you have a lovely, productive winter. Victor Hugo said, "Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face." Direct any questions or suggestions to me at 1517 Laurelwood, Denton, TX 76201



Sometimes the postal system moves more slowly than other times...

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Children And Dulcimers

Adventures in School Music

Glacier View School near Palmer, Alaska by Eric Wold

Glacier View School is located 104 miles from Anchorage, Alaska on the Glen Highway, and is 60 miles from Palmer, the nearest town. It is surrounded by the Chugach and Talketna Mountains where there is snow on the ground from at least October to April. Moose, caribou, black and grizzly bears, and dahl sheep are numerous, along with all kinds of smaller wild animals. Glacier View overlooks the mighty Matanuska Glacier.

About 40 students travel by bus over a 50 mile stretch of highway each morning to get to school. The students range in grades from kindergarten through 12th grade, with 4 teachers.

Last September I began working at Glacier View as a teacher's aide, librarian, and hockey coach. Mark Owen, the music teacher, works with the children almost every day. He asked me to come and play my dulcimer for the 3rd - 5th grade class. I played a variety of music on my dulcimer, which the students loved and wanted to try. Everyone took a turn playing "Clementine."

The school has a cardboard dulcimer, and a few of the students suggested we get a lot of dulcimers and learn to play them instead of the piano. But our school budget cannot afford that.

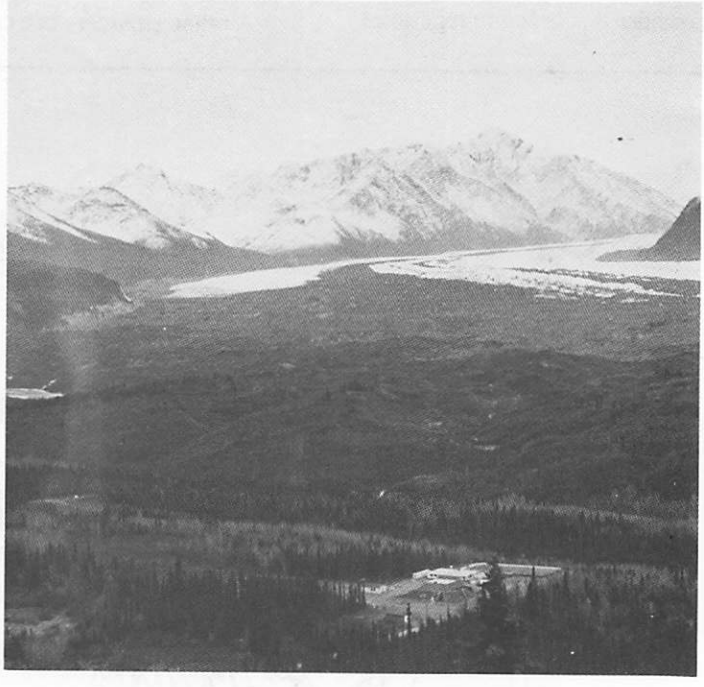
Trevor Roper, a fourth grader, talked me into staying after school and teaching him more songs. Trevor really fell in love with the dulcimer. In Glacier View's Christmas program, Trevor played the dulcimer in a duet with Shelly Gillespie, a fifth grader who played the piano. Even though Trevor is ready to learn more, my duties with hockey practice have kept me from sitting down with him.

I have been learning the instrument on my own. I played quite a bit this past summer at Victory Bible Camp 8 miles down the road. I've also played at the small church we have up here. People seem to enjoy hearing the dulcimer because it is unique and rarely seen here. I understand a woman down the road also has a dulcimer, but doesn't know how to play it. We are going to get together and play.

A few years ago Wade Hampton Miller played at Glacier View. He also plays sometimes up at Sheep Mountain Lodge, about 10 miles up the highway.

I hope to get a hammer dulcimer soon so I can learn to play that and share it with our students. If anyone would like to correspond with me about our music at Glacier View School, my address is Eric Wold, SRC Box 8392, Palmer, AK 99645.

Keep strumming down there in the lower 48. Greetings from the Last Frontier.



Above: Glacier View School
Left: Dulcimer player Trevor Roper

Filer Elementary School Merrillville, Indiana by John C. Carlisle

From flat cardboard...to musical instruments in 24 hours.

From "What's a dulcimer?"...to dulcimer performers in two weeks.

Folk artist-in-residence Dan Keding brought about these changes in both cardboard and people in Kathy Birk's fifth and sixth grade music classes at Filer Elementary School in Merrillville, Indiana last fall.

According to Keding, "It's so hard when you do a folk music residency to leave something concrete behind. If you're a visual artist and you do a sculpture or wall hanging or a painting, it stays behind. Now, however, when Kathy pulls out a dulcimer next year and says, 'Let's sing *This Land Is Your Land*', they'll say, 'Oh, yeah, I remember.' And the whole experience will come back, and that's important."

Keding was chosen because of his experience in other schools; "Over 130 residencies in Illinois, Wisconsin, and, now, in Indiana, in the past seven years."

The dulcimer building and performing project is part of an effort to teach the students about their musical heritages, both American and European. Some of the students, especially those with Eastern European backgrounds, were familiar with mandolins or other stringed instruments, but even they joined the rest of the classes in having almost no exposure to the Appalachian dulcimer.

The dulcimer kits, pre-cut pieces of cardboard, fretboards, tuning pegs, and strings, were purchased from Paige's Music in Indianapolis for $25. When Keding came for his second two-day visit, a Tuesday-Wednesday stay, he spent the school hours performing for the students and teaching them simple folk songs. But after school on Tuesday, the 24 students chosen to be in eight kit-building teams met in the art room, challenged by spray cans of paint, screwdrivers and a preservative oil, as well as the kits.

The first step was to spray paint both sides of the cardboard. No "rules" called for creativity, but no "rules" prevented it either, so some teams painted the outsides of the soon-to-be-dulcimers blue with yellow trim, while others used red as a base color with green trim, creating an early Christmas package look.

A more tedious task called for oiling the 31" long by 1 1/2" wide fretboard. Putting in the nails to anchor the strings at the base of the fretboard and the three tuning pegs to which the strings are attached at the top of the fretboard completed the first day's efforts, all taking about an hour.

As Birk and Keding cleaned up the paint residue after the students left, he talked about his musical background.

"Although I've been a professional performer in folk music since about 1970, I got interested in playing dulcimer about seven years ago. Then, the newspaper in the town where I was living in Wisconsin did an article on me. I turned over the story and on the back was an article saying the next day was the last day for artist-in-residence applications. I thought, 'I wonder what this is all about?' So I called up the Wisconsin Arts Board and they described the program. I said, 'This is great. This is just what I've been dreaming of.' Three years ago I applied for Illinois, and last year I applied for Indiana."

Birk added, "I found out about Dan from Illinois and found out that the Indiana Arts Commission knew about him, too."

The morning after the painting session, the student teams came back before school for the second stage—gluing. This time the cardboard was folded along already provided creases to form a rectangular sound box, 26" long by 4" wide by 2" deep. The students spread white glue over the folded up end flaps and then folded the top pieces down to meet in the center. They then glued the fretboard to the top over the crack where the pieces met. Piling books on top of the instruments to hold the pieces together while the glue set completed the last step of stage two.

Keding said he chose the instrument kit project because the dulcimer is "an instrument that the kids can grow with. I really feel strongly that one of the ways we're going to encourage kids to become more and more interested in folk music is by giving them an instrument they can become proficient at quickly."

Later that day, Keding strung the instruments and showed Birk how to tune them for use in classroom instruction while he was gone.

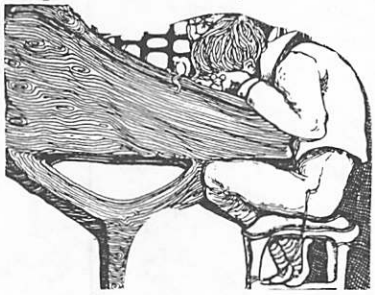
A month later Keding returned for his last residency, which included an evening concert. Following several solos by the visiting artist, the student ensemble performed four songs using the eight dulcimers, two limberjacks, a washboard, a washtub bass, and a stumpfiddle (a collection of noisemakers, cow bells, pie plates, and a tambourine on a broomstick handle).

The success of the concert and the applause of the appreciative audience only spurred further student interest according to Birk. "The kids come into the music room at recess time and go out in the hall and work on the dulcimers. There is still a great interest in them. They want to start a dulcimer club, and some have mastered two or three other songs from the songbook which came with the kits," Birk said.

Keding and two other professional artists were funded by an Artist-In-Residence grant from the Indiana Arts Commission and matching local funds from the Merrillville School Board, the PTO and the Rotary Club.

Later in the school year, local volunteers, including square dancers, guitar and banjo players, and a bluegrass fiddler were to perform for the students and teach them square dance calls and chords for some of the instruments. Birk also teaches guitar for five weeks in her music classes as a group project.

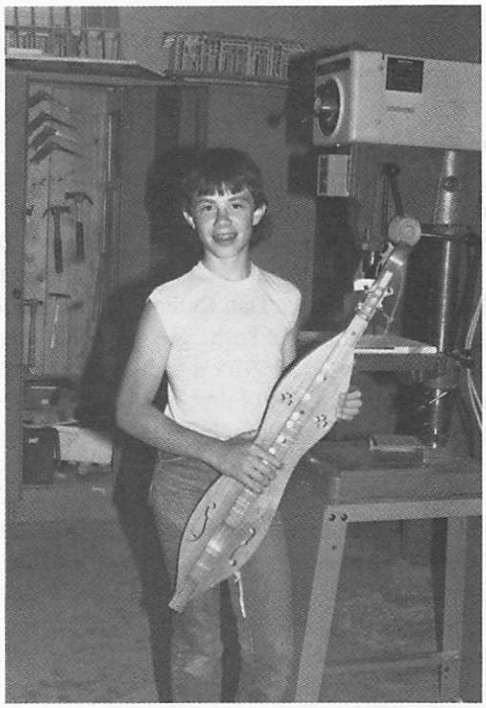
"At the end of February, the kids are going to use all their knowledge about folk songs and instruments to produce a videotape which will be the end of our American study." she said. The videotape will be sent to contacts in Greece, Yugoslavia and Romania, and the students will study music from these countries during the last part of the school year.



Filer Elemtary School students

Dan Keding and students David Vode and Lisa Wittemore (faces showing) work on their dulcimers. Dan Keding and Kathy Birk worked with 5th and 6th grade music student in this project.

Flat Rock Junir High School



For 30 years Brian Beddingfield's grandfathr used an old plank to walk over a wet spot on the cellar floor. Brian rescued it and used the wood to build this dulcimer.

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Flat Rock Jr. High Sch. Flat Rock,NC by Lois Hornbostel

In the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, the students of Flat Rock Junior High School are continuing the tradition of building mountain dulcimers. For the past four years the students of the 9th grade Industrial Arts class have been making beautifully-designed and very playable instruments from start to finish in the nine-week "Introduction to woodworking" course. The students make the dulcimers from scratch, often using woods from home that were formerly part of old chests, tables or planks of hardwood found in basements and attics.

Over ninety dulcimers were built in the 1986-87 school years, and at term-end I was called upon to teach the students how to play their creations. It was one of my most enjoyable teaching experiences because the students were so excited to find out the variety of playing styles and kinds of music their handiwork could make. They breezed through the basics of playing and progressed into chords and intricate rhythm patterns. They did equal justice to traditional Appalachian melodies and rock riffs from Chuck Berry to Bon Jovi, and we even wrote a round called "Copenhagen Snuff"!

This wonderful project was conceived by Eddie Smith, Sam Hanes and Larry Brown, who are teachers in the Junior High's Industrial Arts Department. Up until four years ago the woodworking course project was gun racks. Parents began to ask for something else because they didn't have enough guns for all the racks being brought home. About that time a dulcimer player gave a concert at the school. Sam, Ed and Larry put their heads together, worked out a prototype dulcimer, and found that assembling it used many of the basic woodworking skills they wanted to teach. You also have to admire their good judgement in switching from a weapon accessory to an instrument of music. In building their dulcimers, the students become accustomed to using the various shop machines; learn to measure exactly; analyze their wood and decide the best designs to suit it; learn gluing, sanding, clamping, finishing and, most importantly, sharpen their ability to listen and follow step-by-step instructions.

Sam Hanes cites other important benefits. "First, the students participate in part of the mountain culture. Then Mom and Dad have a sense of pride in the dulcimer their son or daughter has made. School pride is also enhanced when the dulcimers are seen by the public, as they were at a craft show in our local mall. The people were amazed at the quality of the instruments these 9th graders built. Finally, all the skills they learn in building dulcimers can be used in many other projects."

What you notice first when you see a group of these 13-16 year old students working on their dulcimers is the intensity of their interest and the ease with which they speak about technical aspects of building like sound response and string action. According to Eddie Smith, "They are not required to make a dulcimer, but the response is great and we have to chase them out of the shop when the class is over."

The success of the program is certainly due to the dulcimer's musical, historical and visual appeal, but is equally the result of the dynamic personalities of the three men who run it.

Eddie Smith is a native of Cullowhee, NC. He is a school coach and has some interesting avocations. On weekends he's a calf roper in rodeos around the Southeast. He's a guitarist, but also plays mandolin, banjo, fiddle and now, of course, mountain dulcimer His roots are in country music, but he also plays early rock music with a group of other teachers from the junior high called The Faculty Five.

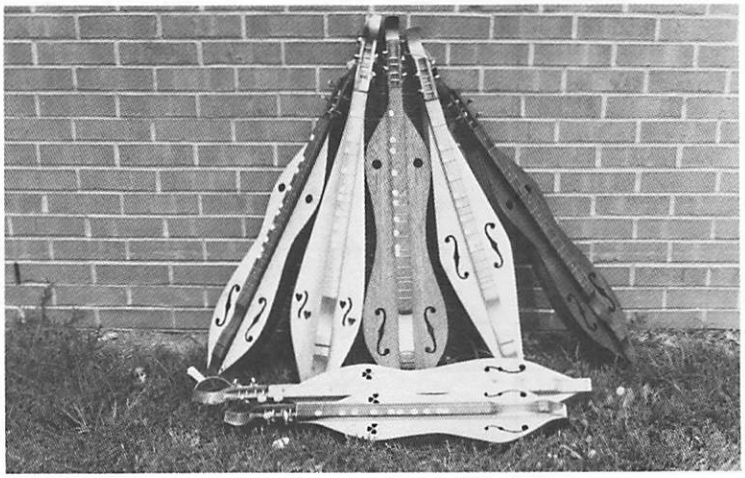
Sam Hanes is from Clyde, NC, and has been teaching junior high school age students for 30 years. He has great rapport with teenagers, due largely to his irreverent humor. We can't print some of his anecdotes here, but Sam's an avid dulcimer festival goer, so you may get to sample his humor firsthand if you meet him.

Larry Brown, the department head, is a Viet Nam veteran born in Penrose, NC. He plays mountain and hammered dulcimers. He built his first dulcimer in 1973 at Western Carolina University. He sums up his feelings about the dulcimer project on a human level. "This program is such a good confidence builder for teenagers. I had one student tell me, 'This is the first thing I've ever done right.'. Some folks might think we're crazy coming in here before classes at 6:30 in the morning, but that's why we do it."

The Flat Rock Junior High dulcimer project gave me a warm appreciation for the enthusiasm, responsibility and humor of these teenagers, and bodes well for the future of dulcimer building.

If you are interested in starting a similar program in your local schools, Eddie Smith will be glad to hear from you and share his experience. He can be reached c/o Flat Rock Junior High School, 108 Blue Ridge Road, Flat Rock, NC 28731.

Lois Hornbostel is busy at work traveling to schools in North Carolina, conducting workshops in cardboard dulcimer building and instructing students and teachers in the art of dulcimer playing. She has several books published by Mel Bay.



Dulcimers built by Flat Rock Junior High School students

The Sociable Dulcimer

A Source Of Music And Ideas For Dulcimer Clubs

Paul Furnas

Course Number Tablature for the Hammered Dulcimer

Course Number Tablature for the hammered dulcimer is quite easy for those players who have made the effort to become familiar with it. It may, however, seem somewhat formidable to players who have tried it only once or twice, and then rejected it before having a chance to become comfortable with it.

In the diagram below, I am proposing a slight change to Course Number Tablature which should make this very useful tablature more "user friendly." The slight change is the use of the number zero for the g#-c# course in the treble and middle registers.

Most players keep their bearings on the instrument by looking at the "marked" courses (indicated in the diagram by heavy lines). Using the number zero for the g#-c# course makes it easier to recognize "marked" courses in the tablature. The marked courses in the treble and middle registers now will have the same course numbers as the marked courses in the bass register, and a convenient rule of thumb also emerges.

A Convenient Rule Of Thumb

Any "straight line" or "stick figure" digit (i.e., 1,4, 7) will *always* indicate a marked course, and any digit with a curve in it (i.e., 9, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9) will *always* indicate an unmarked course. (The double digit numbers, 10 and 11, are the only exceptions to this rule). If you are comfortable counting by three's, you can discover another useful rule about the numbers 3, 6, and 9.

12-Line Graphic Tablature

An ideal tablature for beginners is the somewhat less elegant but extremely user-friendly 12-line Graphic Tablature used on the following page. Marked strings are indicated by heavy lines, and three different note shapes are used to indicate the three different registers:

◆ = **Treble register**

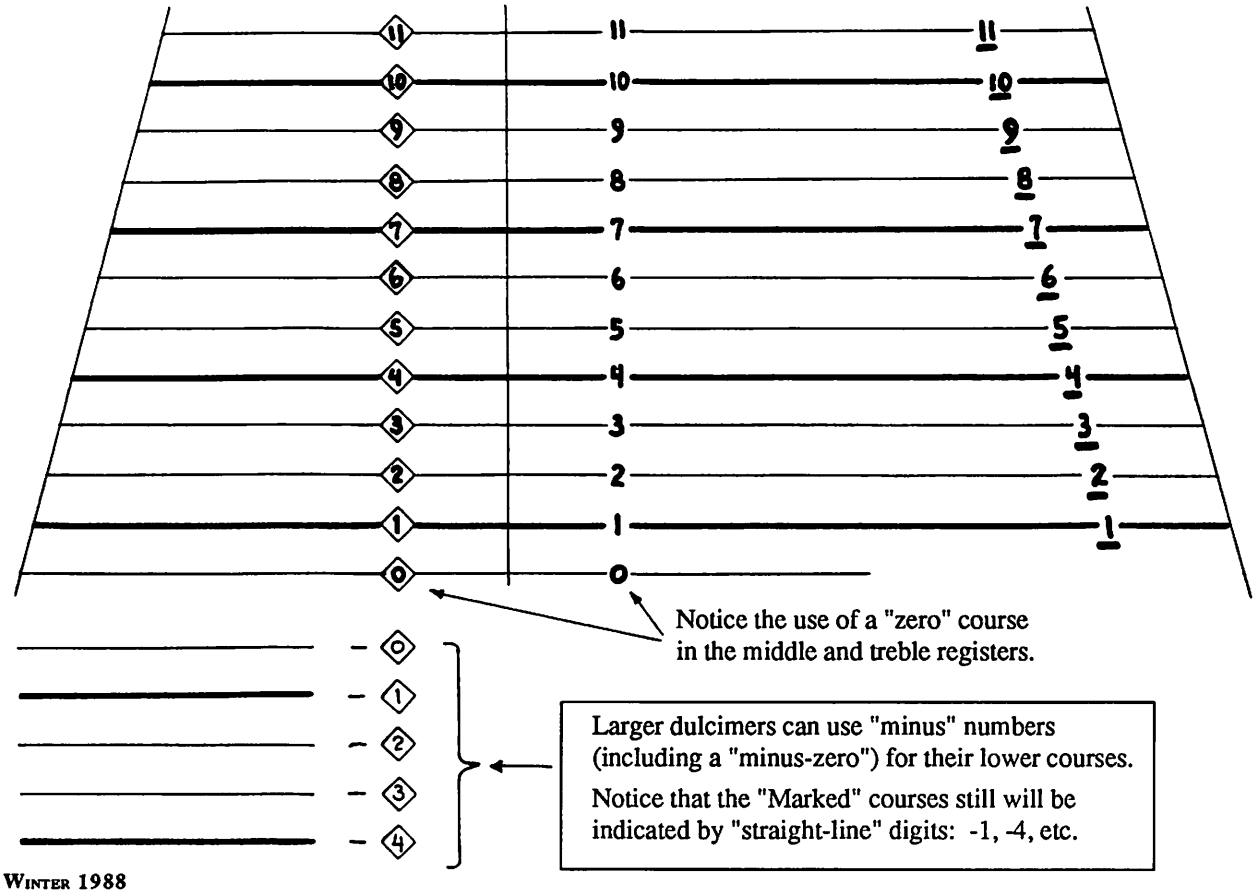
▬ = **Middle register**

▬ = **Bass register**

These note shapes, which are borrowed from late medieval notation, are very easy to make with a calligraphic pen (after a little practice).

If you would like an unused sheet of 12-line Graphic Tablature pager (like that used for the music on the next page), send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Paul Furnas, P.O. Box 477, Palo Alto, California 94302.

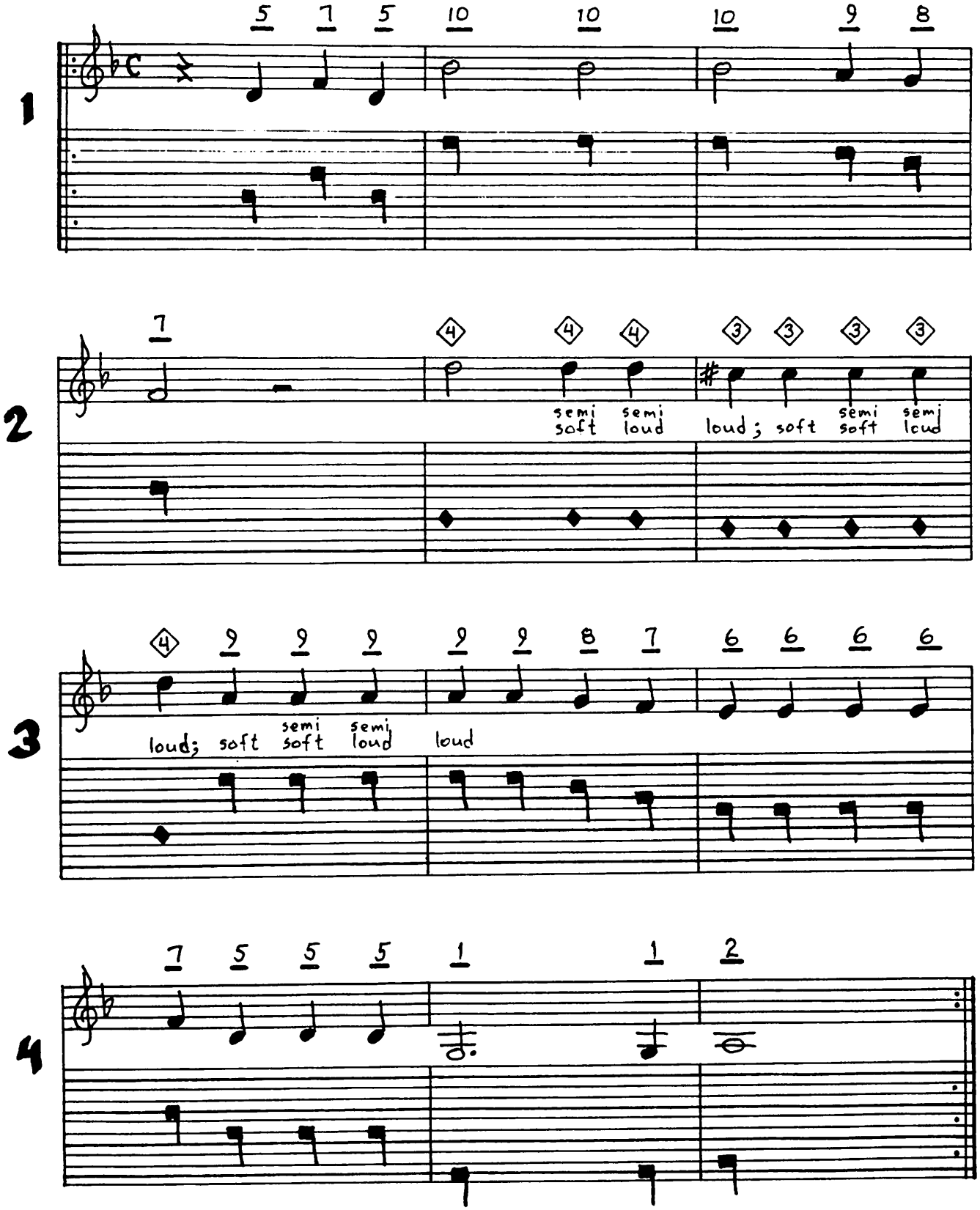
Slightly Modified Course Number Tablature



The World's Most Beautiful Round

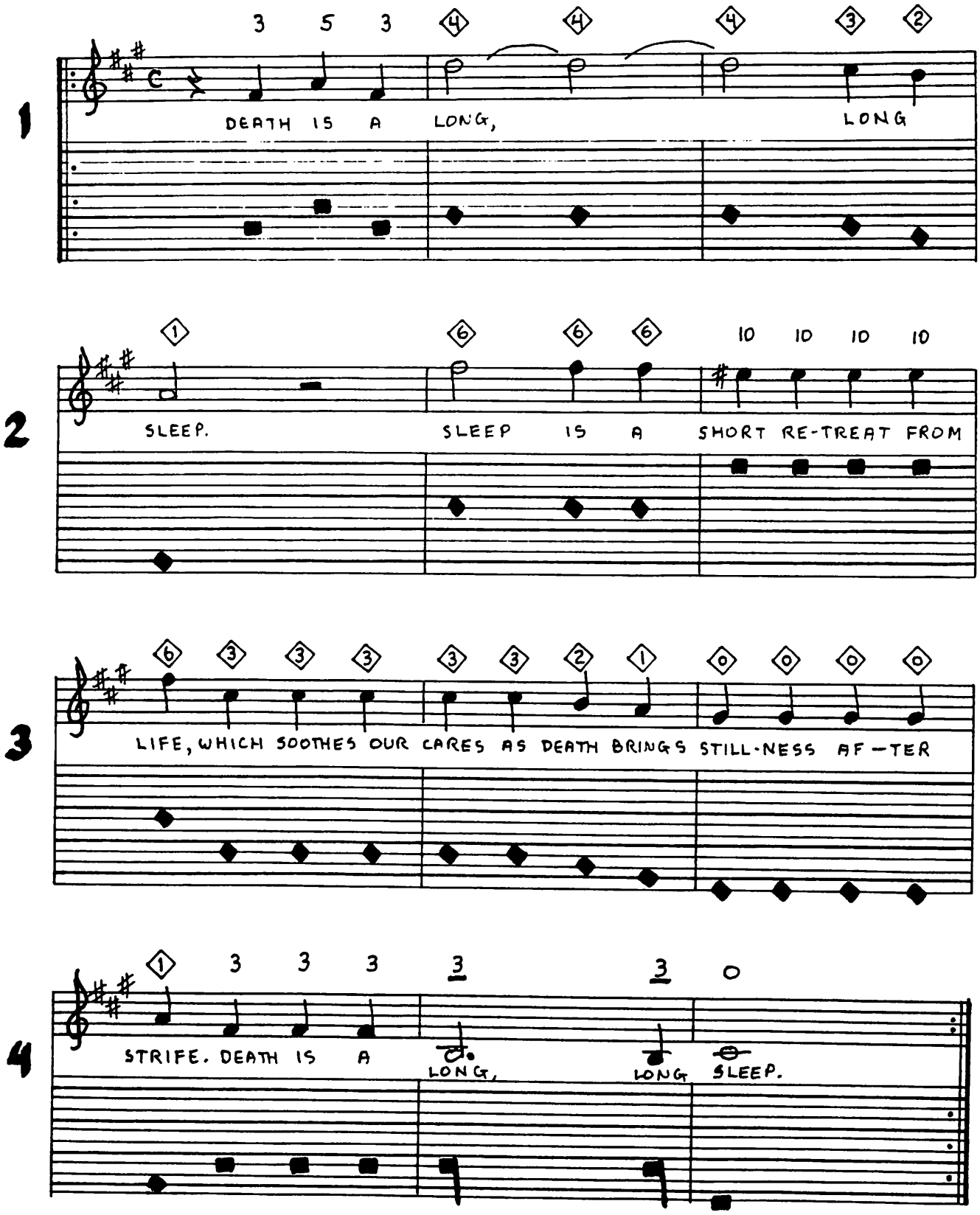
This miniature masterpiece is extremely easy to play. The only tricky spot is the rest at the very beginning of the round. It is also an excellent piece for learning about phrasing (notice the suggestions for soft, semi-soft, semi-loud and loud). When you are comfortable with this setting in the key of d-minor, try the setting on the following page in the more challenging key of f#-minor.

Franz Joseph Hayden (1732 - 1809)



The same round in a different key

Even if you strongly prefer staff notation to tablature, you may find the tablature helpful for this particular setting of the round in the key of f#-minor. First learn the setting in d-minor, by trying the 12-line Graphic Tablature on this page. When you are comfortable with the Graphic Tablature, review the "Convenient Rule of Thumb" and then try the Course Number Tablature on this page.



Dulcimers on Parade...

Ed Dale
Tolland, Connecticut

At first blush being invited to play in a parade sounded like great fun. It was, after all, one of the few paying jobs the band, Rambling Pitchfork, had been offered in its generally, though unintentionally, nonprofit history. And the tricentennial Fourth of July celebration for rural Woodstock, Connecticut figured to be as pleasant and low key as most things are in that town. This was born out on the fateful day when I drove past the stately oaks that lined the parade route under the clear and sunny sky; past the Brownie troops, high school bands, Morris dancers and highland pipers; searching for our float in the Fourth Division.

Our float was a 1928 Ford flat bed truck with wood railings. A stunning example of meticulous restoration driven by the local man who had built it back to show room condition. We had just about the right amount of room in the back for my hammered dulcimer and the other instruments among the balloons and flags. I was really looking forward to playing in my first parade. Then our friendly driver started the truck and we jolted into position, with me hanging desperately onto a failing with one hand and my dulcimer with the other, with one foot steadying my stand. It turned out that restoration of the truck had, for authenticity's sake, required that the original parts be used whenever possible; or if a replacement was not available, the original would be kept even if it didn't work very well. This latter approach was evident whenever the truck shifted gears. There seemed to be an ongoing dispute of major proportions between the clutch and the transmission. And having been unable to salvage or replace the springs, the entire suspension system had been eliminated. This was not at all like the car in the commercials where priceless diamonds are cut in the back seat.

As you might suspect, playing hammered dulcimer under these conditions required some adjustments. There being no way to anchor the instrument, I started out holding while playing one handed. This worked out okay on reels where I could just play every other note, but proved unsatisfactory for waltzes and jigs and I had to come up with a different approach. Fortunately this was a long parade and, in traditional rural New England style, there were a lot more people in it than watching, so I had some time for experimenting The following suggestions are offered to others foolish enough to play a moving dulcimer. Practice and quick adaptation are what really counts though, and you may want to work on your technique with your dulcimer on one end of a water bed and two children wrestling on the other.

The real key is to hit the right note at the right time while keeping yourself, the dulcimer, and the stand from falling over. There are several factors that have to be dealt with. The truck had a constant, but generally rhythmic, sway from side to side. To compensate for this you merely have to aim a bit to the left of right of where you really want to hit so that the dulcimer is in the right place by the time the hammer hits the string. To compensate for shifting, I'd aim for the string that was one course to the left and two courses higher than I wanted to play and the dulcimer would bounce right into the correct place when the clutch was let out. This will probably vary with the make and vintage of the truck. After that the only things left to be dealt with are the bumps in the road. It was throwing my rhythm off when the dulcimer bounced up as the hammer came down. Here it helps to face forward. I found, through trial and considerable error, that I could gauge the seriousness of the bump looking over the top of the cab and adjust the timing of my downward strokes so that the hammer would reach the dulcimer as it rose and fell. And finally I was able to adjust how hard I was hitting so that I could use both hands to play most of the time. What this really involves is placing the loudest accents on the notes hit as the dulcimer bounces up, thus driving it back down to the safety of the stand. I never did totally master sharp turns and hill crests; there were only a few, so practice time was short. The most promising approach to turns seemed to be to let go of the hammer and let it bounce on the right note. Then grab the hammer in the other hand while switching the hand that holds the dulcimer.

Well, to make a long parade story short, it all worked out fine, though next time I think I'll play with a marching band. All told, it was a moving experience.

Ed Dale builds hammered dulcimers and tall tales in Tolland, Connecticut.

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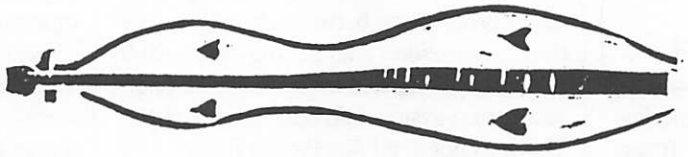
Dulcimer Players Notebook



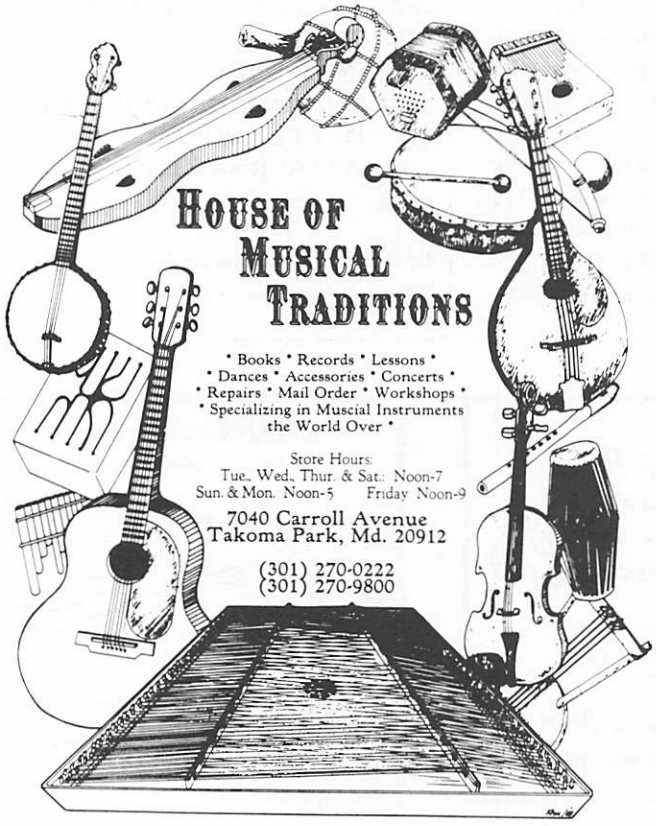
Lorraine Lee

I chose "Groundhog" because the song is fun and easy to play, and the subject is fitting for this time of year. The origins of our Groundhog Day observances are deeply rooted in antiquity. Groundhogs don't really become a nuisance, though, until our gardens start to sprout.

The Northern European cave bear was a deity of the cave men. It was still a divine figure in the seventh century at the time of the creation of the epic poem Beowulf in Northern England. Beowulf is poetic Old English for bear, literally bee-wolf. The disappearance of the bear during the winter, and the absence of sunlight indicated the death of the god. If the bear cast a shadow on its first appearance in the warm days of late winter it meant that the resurrection was incomplete. If he did not cast his shadow he was believed to be a god, the cycle was complete, and the new solar year could begin.

These days on February 2nd the appearance of Punxsutawney Pete, our modern Pennsylvania groundhog, provides copy for weather reporters and columnists throughout the country. If he sees his shadow, forecasters predict another six weeks of winter. No shadow means an early spring. Beowulf is rarely mentioned.

The song "Groundhog" is widespread in American tradition and there are many popular versions, each with its own variation of lyrics and melody. This is the way I learned it years ago and I'd be hard put to figure out exactly whose version I started with. I use an Ionian (major) melody, but I have often heard partly major, partly mixolydian tunes. They are always played at a lively tempo.



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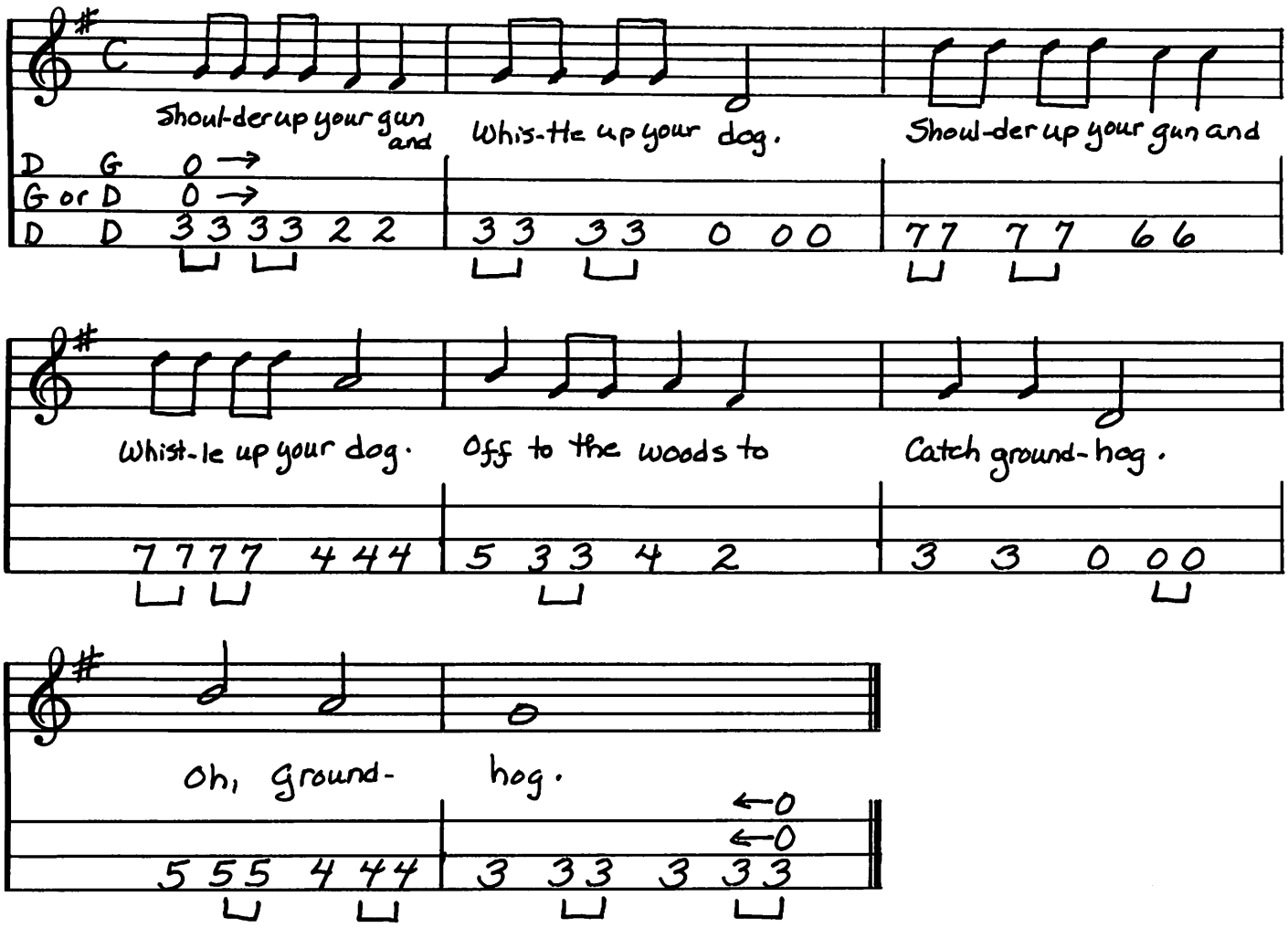
Groundhog

arr. Lorraine Lee



Shoulder up your gun and whistle up your dog,
Shoulder up your gun and whistle up your dog.
Off to the woods to hunt groudhog.
Oh groundhog.

Here comes Sal with a ten foot pole,
Here comes Sal with a ten foot pole.
Get that whistle stick out of his hole.
Oh groundhog.

Here comes Sal with a snicker and a grin,
Here comes Sal with a snicker and a grin.
Ground hog grease all over her chin.
Oh ground hog.

Look at them fellers they're about to fall,
Look at them fellers they're about to fall.
Eat 'til their britches won't button at all.
Oh groundhog.

The meat's in the cupboard and the butter's in the churn,
The meat's in the cupboard and the butter's in the churn.
If that ain't groudhog I'll be durn.
Oh goundhog.

The meat's in the cupboard and the butter's on the shelf,
The meat's in the cupboard and the butter's on the shelf.
If you want anymore you can sing it yourself.
Oh groundhog.

Reviews

Edited by Carrie Crompton

Dulcimer Dimensions/No Strings Attached, Turquoise Records, HC-84, Box 1358, Whitesburg, KY 41858 (LP, cassette)

The Virginia-based band No Strings Attached has sent another musically and artistically sophisticated as well as highly entertaining album our way, *Dulcimer Dimensions*. The instrumentation includes hammered dulcimer, guitar, mandolin, synthesizer, psaltery, piano, chromatic harmonica, kalimba, bouzouki, saxophone and a varied percussion section. All of the instruments except the sax were played by the five multi-talented members of the group, Randy Marchany, Suzy Gorsline Irwin, Bob Thomas, Pete Hastings and Wes Chappell.

Not only do these musicians demonstrate their talents as musical masters of their various instruments, but three of them have written most of the tunes appearing on the album. Each of the tunes has a unique flavor and all show a flair for composition which ranges from the poignant and beautiful to the downright silly and joyful. "C. W.'s Bounce" is one of the latter; it makes a listener giggle and wish there were a traditional dance called The Bounce, like the waltz or the polka. "Hunting Island" and "A Minor Meander" are lovely tunes. Each selection sports a different instrumentation, always helping the piece to tell its tale. The highly whimsical and fun interpretation of "Gimme That Wine" and "Putting On The Ritz" round out an extremely varied and interesting album from the first to last note.

Bonnie Carol

Gifts II • Traditional Christmas Carols/Joemy Wilson, Dargason Music, P.O. Box 189, Burbank, CA 91503 (LP, cassette, compact disc)

As the title indicates, this release includes most of the well-known and loved carols, among them, "Angels We Have Heard On High", "Joy To The World", "Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming" and "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." There are also several carols you won't find on the average Christmas album, "Shepherds, Shake Off Your Drowsy Sleep", "Masters In This Hall" and "Mary's Cradle Song." Joemy Wilson leads on hammered dulcimer, accompanied by the Carolan Consort: Anisa Angarola on guitar, Sylvia Woods on Celtic harp, Miamon Miller on violin and Valerie King on flute.

I have been an admirer of Joemy's work since first introduced to *Carolan's Cup*. *Gifts* does not disappoint me. Joemy and the Carolan Consort achieve a lushness of sound that is theirs alone. They play with the precision of a string quartet *and* the vivacity of a folk band. Their sound must be attributed, in large part, to Joemy's rich sense of arrangement. It is this talent for putting things together, along with her own exceptional musical ability and that of her fellow musicians, that makes *Gifts* such a joy to listen to. Making a group of standards sound fresh and new is no small feat; through sensitivity and imagination, Joemy Wilson has succeeded on *Gifts*.

Celia Wyckoff

Tunes For The Hammered Dulcimer As Played By Paul Van Arsdale/ Transcribed by Jean Lewis, Twin Lakes Road, South Salem, NY 10590 (book)

A collection of Paul Van Arsdale tunes is now available for hammer dulcimer. Jean Lewis has taped Van Arsdale at various workshops and festivals and has transcribed his tunes into standard notation for the benefit of players who find it easier to learn a new tune by sight-reading rather than "by ear."

Ms. Lewis' book is divided into three sections with a total of thirty-six tunes. Part I, entitled "Grandpa's Tunes", includes songs Van Arsdale learned from his grandfather. These tunes have been preserved in his grandfather's playing style.

"Paul's Current Favorites", Part II, includes tunes Van Arsdale learned from Vic Kibler and other musicians—jigs, waltzes, hornpipes, polkas, rags and reels. These tunes have been transcribed in the Van Arsdale style using triplets and other embellishments.

Part III contains "Paul's Compositions" including "Dulcimer Reel", "Robin's Rainsong" and "Niskayuna Ramble."

Players with competent sight-reading ability who find it easier to learn by standard notation than by ear will appreciate Jean Lewis' effort in putting together this collection.

Ken and Shirley Richardson

Hammered Dulcimer Traditions/ Maggie Sansone, Maggie's Music Studio, P.O. Box 4144, Annapolis, MD 21403 (cassette)

Traditional tunes from Ireland, Scotland and England predominate on this tape, with a rag and a French Canadian medley thrown in for variety. The hammer dulcimer is featured with a wide variety of instruments, from concertina and pennywhistle to viola da gamba and recorder. Maggie's playing style is lively and lightly ornamented, and her choice of tunes makes for pleasant listening. However, choosing the succession of pieces on an album or tape is always difficult for recording artists. Too often, the musician in exasperation decides to merely alternate major and minor tunes for variety. This often results in a disjointed hodge-podge, with little continuity from beginning to end. Unfortunately, this tape follows that pattern. Rearranging the succession of pieces with regard to keys, style and mood would strengthen the impact of the music.

Too few dulcimer players attempt Scottish strathspeys. Is this because of the

tricky "Scottish snap" rhythm, which is precisely why strathspeys are so endearing to hear and fun to play? The "Scotch Mist"/"Marquis Of Huntley's Strathspey" medley is a fine example of two strathspeys played in a lilting, moderate tempo, resisting the usual temptation to play strathspeys too fast. The simple, yet beautiful duet between the harp and dulcimer makes this medley one of the best on the tape.

"Reel de Montreal"/"Reel de Lapin" are fine examples of the lilting, infectious dance tunes of Quebec. Although the hammer dulcimer was not a part of the Quebecois tradition, there's no doubt that, after hearing this rendition, musicians from that province would want to take up the instrument. Maggie should be commended for helping to expose the traditional music audience to the vast body of French-Canadian music.

My main disappointment with the tape was the arrangement of "Abbot's Bromley's Hornpipe." In my opinion, this is one of those ancient melodies that must be arranged carefully to preserve the haunting, mystical quality. That quality is absent here; the concertina and penny-whistle tend to trivialize the piece, making it sound no different from any standard fiddle tune. This is perplexing, since Maggie demonstrates on "Ductia" and "Bridget Cruise" an ability for such sensitive arrangements.

Overall, I found the music admirably stood the test of repeated listenings. Maggie Sansone's *Hammered Dulcimer Traditions* is a tape that many dulcimer enthusiasts will enjoy.

Christy Cook

Season's Greetings!/Carole Koenig, 2477 Cheremoya Ave., #102, Hollywood, CA 90068 (cassette)

Carole Koenig's latest release, *Season's Greetings!* continues her welcome contributions to the repertoire of recorded hammered dulcimer music with a (broadly) classical emphasis, adding to her previous recordings of Boyce and Praetorius. *Season's Greetings!*, like the earlier two, is professional and polished. It reflects the best of the timeless and delicate beauty of the Winter Solstice season. Here are presented a selection of familiar and some less familiar Christmas tunes done instrumentally, interwoven with more selections from Praetorious' *Terpsichore*, many in medleys; for example, "The Holly And The Ivy" segues smoothly into "Volte CCXXIII", then back into an echo of "The Holly And The Ivy" at the end.

As with Carole's earlier recordings, her dulcimer carries the lead; the backup combines old sounds - violin family and percussion - with the new - a synthesizer - in a creative and tasteful blend.

Pete Benson

Wheels/Fred Meyer, Box 54, Clear Creek, IN 47426 (cassette)

Right from the start it is easy to see that Fred Meyer's *Wheels* is not a traditional dulcimer recording. The first indication is the cassette's artwork showing a mountain dulcimer rolling along upon a set of wheels; a quick glance at the song list confirms the suspicion. Of eighteen songs, only six are traditional; the remaining twelve cuts are contemporary pieces ranging from the Beatles' "Eight Days A Week" to the standard "Mr. Sandman." Fred Meyer plays mountain dulcimer on all pieces, and on several cuts (particularly the traditional songs) is backed by guitar (Jim Miller), fiddle (Kimberly Heath, Pete Sutherland), mandolin (Kimberly Heath) and bouzouki (Keith Cress).

The strong point of this recording is the arrangements of the contemporary pieces. Meyer offers staccato, syncopated arrangements with a creative flavor that makes *Wheels* roll right along. There are, however, some bumps in the road: occasional string buzzes and dead notes detract slightly from these otherwise well-played pieces. The recording quality is quite good. The recorded sound of Meyer's dulcimer is full and even, which is essential for his fingerpicking style to be successful on tape. On the pieces featuring additional instruments, each instrument can be heard clearly, and good stereo separation is evident. On two pieces in particular, the title cut and "Mr. Sandman", the guitar provides extremely effective rhythm accompaniment utilizing combinations of chords and bass runs, thus allowing the dulcimer to present intricate melody and harmony movements. On the traditional tunes, the fiddle and bouzouki often carry the melody, with the guitar and Meyer's dulcimer providing the rhythm background.

Overall, *Wheels* is an enjoyable collection of contemporary and traditional songs, with the spotlight clearly on the strength of the contemporary arrangements.

Mark Fowler

Sing We All Merrily • A Colonial Christmas/Linda Russell and Companie, Flying Fish Records, Inc., (Linda) 250 W. 99th St., #8C, New York, NY 10025

This delightful album is the artist's vision of the music and spirit of an early American Christmas, with selections from the many traditions brought to America by the early settlers. Russell's vocals are beautiful done, but what I enjoyed most about this album was the wonderful instrumental work underlying each tune. I would have preferred more interludes between verses to highlight the instrumental combinations. Hammered and mountain dulcimers are featured, with accompaniment by violin, cello, guitar, mandolin, Celtic harp and various flutes, whistles and percussion. A set of tuned bells or chimes provides a special touch to "Silent Night."

The album notes are excellent. A short history of each carol is given. This recording will appeal to anyone who is interested in the evolution of the Christmas celebration in America.

Sue Forbes

Randy Mohr
Spokane, Washington

The Answer Column
Sam Rizzetta

I really enjoy your column and have found it helpful. Could you please address the problems and best ways to amplify fretted and hammer dulcimers? Stand mike versus pickup. Low versus high impedance. What is a transducer? Autoharp pickups on hammer dulcimers? Speakers on top of poles?

I feel somewhat like a martyr trying to electrify these mountain sounds, but it is upsetting to put on a program only to find out afterwards that people in the back could just barely hear.

I currently use a lapel mike from Radio Shack and a small Peavey amplifier (20 or 40 amp?). I am able to insert the mike into a sound hole of my fretted dulcimer and it works very well, but it is not adequate for use with the hammer dulcimer.

How would you suggest to amplify dulcimers with minimal expense and amount of equipment (it must fit into a VW bug), for instance for school programs in cafeterias or gymnasiums and in nursing homes? Is it best to stay with small-room audiences? It certainly is easier.

A good microphone on a stand is likely to give the most natural acoustic sound reproduction. However, feedback problems will limit how much volume can be achieved on stage and for live programs. It can be cheaper to get acceptable results with a transducer pickup on the instrument, which also eliminates the need for annoying microphones and stands. In the recording studio feedback is not a problem, but a pickup might still be used for some effects.

A transducer pickup is a device which converts the mechanical vibration of a musical instrument, usually the soundboard, into an electronic signal which can be used to generate an amplified sound when connected to a guitar-type amplifier or a sound system.

The output impedance of microphones or transducers must be matched to the input of the amplifying system. A good, professional stage sound system or recording studio will have a mixing console, or "mixing board", with low impedance (low Z) inputs. Most portable guitar amplifiers have high impedance (high Z) inputs. If you work with a portable amplifier, you need a high impedance transducer. For use with stage sound systems and recording studios you can purchase a "direct box" which will convert the transducer signal to low impedance and get the signal to the mixing board in useable form.

Regarding Autoharp "add-on" pickups, I am told that they don't work well on hammer dulcimer. I haven't liked the sound of such set ups I've heard, but haven't tried them myself.

In a large room or auditorium it is often necessary to raise speakers (thus, speakers on top of stands or "poles") so that all listeners can hear. You need a clear, straight-line path to the stage in order to *see* what is going on. Similarly, you need a clear, straight line path to the speakers in order to *hear* all the information and music they are producing. Just as a stage must sometimes be raised so all can see, speakers may need to be raised so that all may hear. They don't necessarily need to be on "poles." Setting your amp on the stage or on a chair or table may be adequate. If everyone can see your amp, they can hear it. An ideal set up would probably have the speakers a bit above eye level or a little higher for everyone in the audience.

Lapel mikes have been popular for acoustic guitars and work all right on fretted dulcimers. If you like to work with an external mike, the Radio Shack PZM microphone, current list about $40, is the cheapest mike of professional capability that I like with hammer dulcimer. It does not have a fitting to attach to a microphone stand and some creative experimenting is necessary But it can give good results with less feedback on hammer dulcimers than some more expensive mikes.

Fretted dulcimers generally work well with many of the guitar transducer pickups. I use a Barcus Berry pickup attached to the fretstaff near the saddle or bridge, ie., near the strumming or picking end. C-Tapes Limited makes C-Ducer transducer systems that work well on a variety of acoustic instruments. These transducers sense the vibrations of a relatively large area of the soundboard. The result is a more faithful acoustic sound. The C-Tapes work very nicely on the fretted dulcimer and, so far, are the only pickups that I like on hammer dulcimer. They give me a less "electric" tone than other systems I've used and provide a far more natural bass than I've been able to achieve otherwise. The transducer is built into a flexible plastic strip that adheres onto the soundboard with a sticky adhesive. A great deal of experimenting is necessary to find the optimum location to attach the pickup. A single pickup works all right for the occasional situation requiring amplification. A two pickup system is available which permits a more balanced tone and should be considered for professional stage use and recording with hammer dulcimer.

There are a couple of drawbacks with the C-Tapes. One is that the sticky adhesive is a hassle to constantly attach and remove every time you wish to use it. And it may damage some types of finishes, such as an oil finish. If you leave the C-Tape attached, then you have to deal with a long wire dangling from the instrument. The pickup can be permanently mounted and wired to a connector on the dulcimer's frame, but this may be a touch unsightly. However, C-Tapes seem to be the best off-the-shelf pickup presently going for hammer dulcimers, and I am glad to have them available. For instruments of my own manufacture, custom systems are built inside the

dulcimers as an option; these are, of course, less obtrusive and more trouble-free.

For single C-Tape applications, experiment with soundboard locations in between the treble bridge and bass bridge. Listen carefully through your amplifier to the tone and volume of each note in comparison to all other notes on the dulcimer. Keep moving the pickup until you find a location yielding the most agreeable sound balance. You won't achieve a perfect balance, but listen for a compromise you can live with.

Current list prices on high impedance C-Tapes are about $135 for a one pickup system and $200 for a two pickup version. If your local music store doesn't stock them, you can order C-Tapes direct from me at Rizzetta music (see DPN ad for address).

The minimum amount of equipment and expense needed to amplify your dulcimers depends on a number of important factors. Obviously, the size of the hall and audience dictates how much power and sophistication is required; school gyms and cafeterias are acoustically awful. Nursing homes, hospitals, recreation halls and auditoriums are often better. Buy the best sounding amp you can afford and can stand to carry. I have a Mesa Boogie Studio .22, a moderately small size tube amp with lovely tone. It will about double or triple the loudness of my dulcimer and is all right for most small settings where I don't have a stage sound system. A more powerful amp would give a cleaner sound with less noise at greater volume levels. It would also be more expensive and heavier. Don't place too much faith in the power ratings of the manufacturers: listen to what various models and brands sound like.

Some of the modern solid-state amps are very portable and designed for acoustic instruments with transducer pickups. Polytone is a brand much used by acoustic musicians in bluegrass and jazz. Peavey and Galien-Kruger also make amps especially for electrically amplified acoustic stringed instruments, and there are probably other manufacturers as well. Once your dulcimer is adequately wired with a pickup, take it into music stores and try all the amps you can. The amplifier is part of your sound and different amps will give different tone qualities.

Another consideration in your sound is whether you'll also need amplification to sing or talk. If the answer is "yes", complexity increases. You may need a vocal mike on a stand, or a lapel mike may do. If your audiences are not too large and power requirements not too great, you may be able to use an amplifier with two input channels, one for your instrument and one for your vocal mike. Galien-Kruger makes an amplifier especially for combining vocal and instrument pickup inputs. Perhaps there are other such manufacturers.

All this assumes you're playing solo, of course, and in rooms that are not too large. The problems of a group or band are greatly increased and beyond the scope of this article. But a good pickup system on your dulcimer and your 40 Watt amp might allow you to play for 50 to 80 people, perhaps even in a corner of a gym or cafeteria. Be aware that those kinds of rooms can be acoustically impossible, even with a sophisticated sound system (not to mention your little amp all by its lonesome!). A music room, large classroom, recreation room or *small* auditorium will be more satisfactory with the minimal sound reinforcement we're discussing.

I might add that loudness is not the only reason to amplify. Electronic effects devices can give extra control over your sound, both on stage and in the recording studio, even if your goal is a "natural" acoustic sound. There are a wide variety of electronic effects, such as "chorus" and "reverb" and "equalization", to name but a few, that can be employed to compensate for undesirable elements introduced by other facets of the room or sound system. Or I may want to create the illusion of playing music in a different acoustic environment. For instance, I may not be able to take the audience into a cathedral, but I might let them hear what that could sound like via electronic manipulation. And purely electronic fun and foolishness is available for those of you more daring dulcimerists.

Remember that if you provide music to audiences and/or earn income from performing, you must be heard to entertain or educate, or be invited back! If you regularly play to rooms and audiences larger than a school classroom, and a sound system is unavailable or inadequate, then it may be a necessary career move to provide your own sound reinforcement. It is a part of your musical instrument and music and must be chosen with the same forethought and care.

Please send your questions for this column directly to Sam Rizzetta, Rizzetta Music, P.O. Box 510, Inwood, WV 25428. Questions about building and/or playing hammer and fretted dulcimers are welcome.

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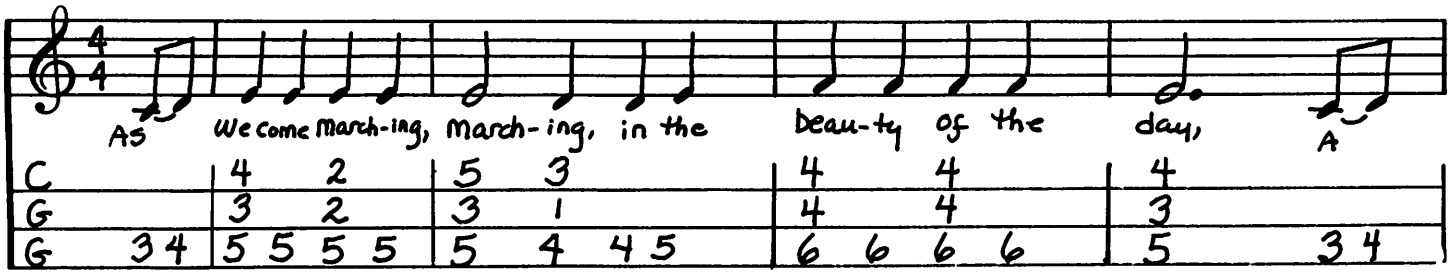
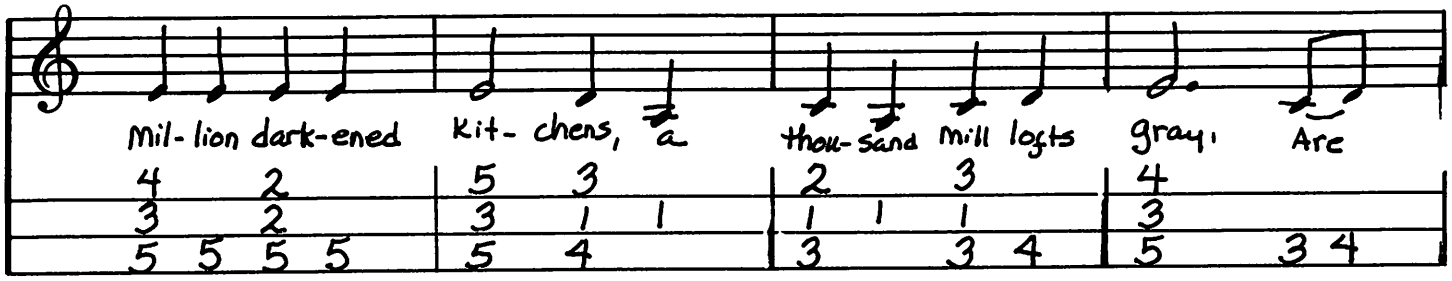
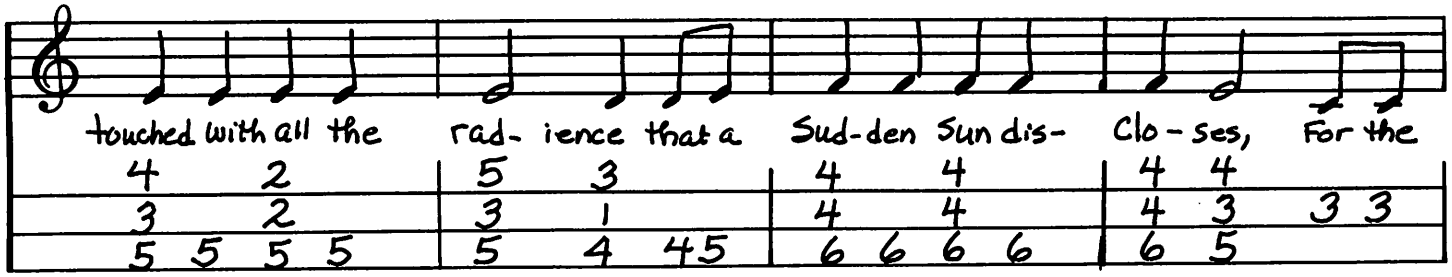
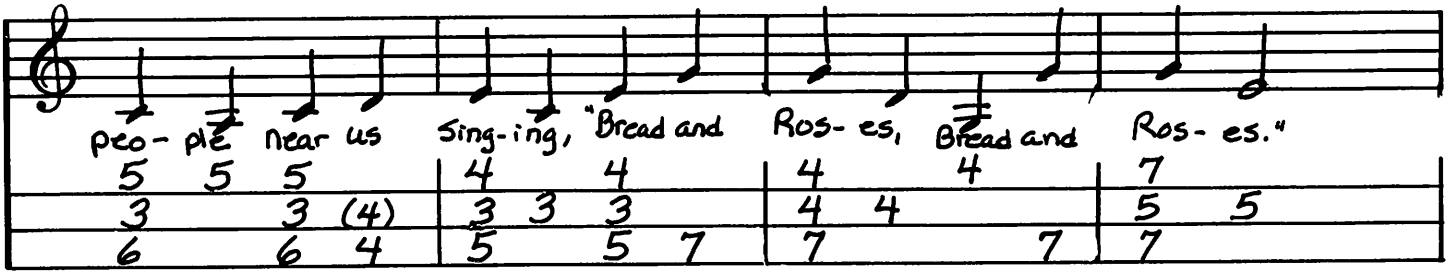
Bread And Roses

arr. Rosamond Campbell









As we come marching, marching, we battle, too, for men,
For they are women's children and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes,
Hearts starve as well as bodies: Give us bread, but give us roses.

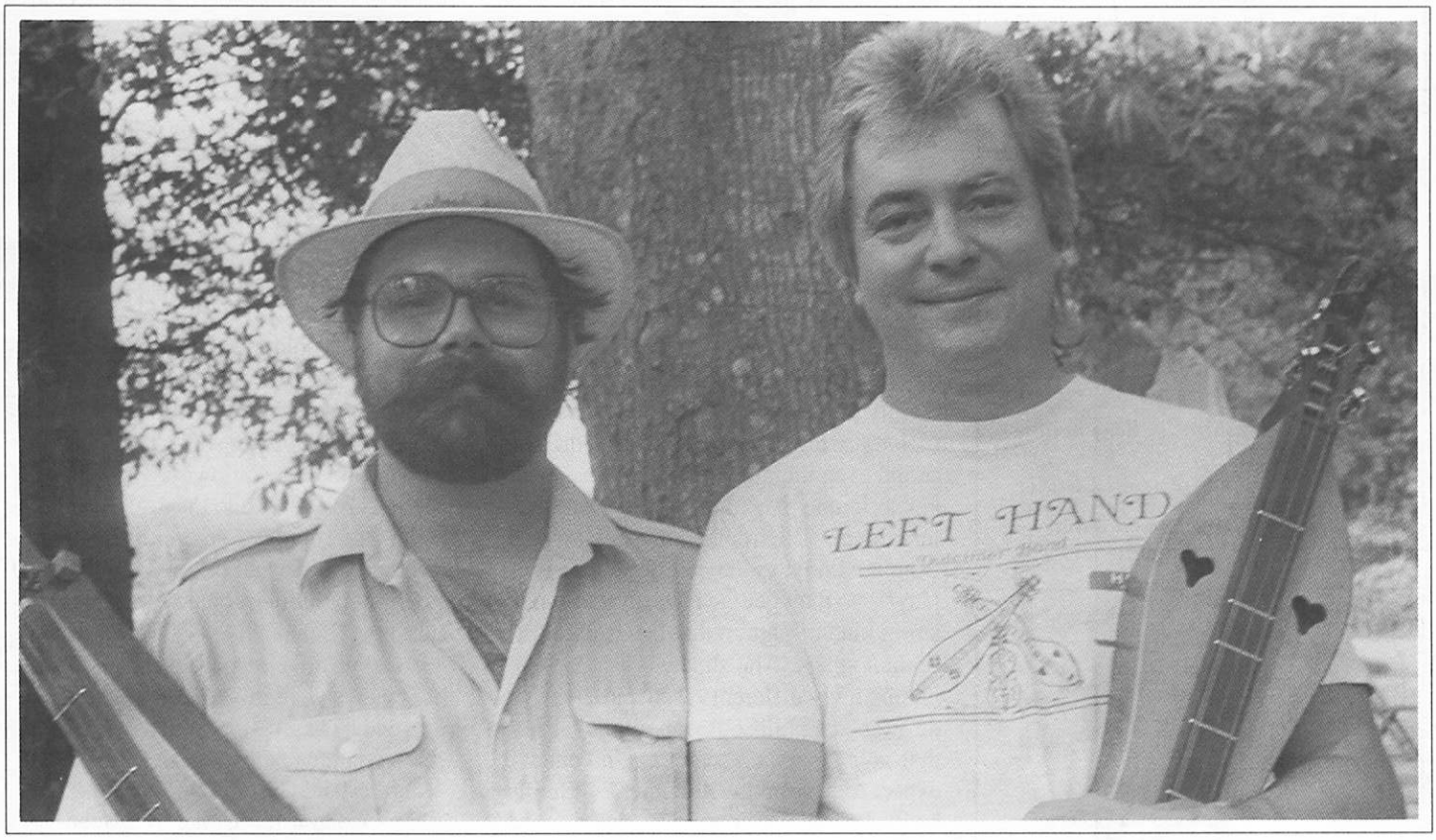
As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient song of bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew.
Yes, it is bread we fight for, but we fight for roses, too.

As we come marching, marching, we bring the Greater Days,
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.
No more the drudge and idler, ten that toil where one reposes,
But a sharing of life's glories, Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses.

This song dates from 1912 and was first sung during a textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Rosamond Campbell, a fine dulcimer player and teacher, lives in Winnetka, Illinois

The Left Hand Dulcimer Band

an interview by Carol Stober
Talladega, Alabama



An unforgettable scenario occurred at an annual Tennessee Mountain Folk Festival where traditional musicians gathered to share their tunes and talents. The group entertaining on stage consisted of two dulcimer players and a fiddler. Nothing unusual, until a cluster of teenagers seated on blankets requested a Cindi Lauper song. Everyone listened intently as a contemporary arrangement captured the imagination and spirit of folks unaccustomed to rock and pop. But these guys pulled it off, and sounded 100% old-timey as their voices blended with their mountain instruments.

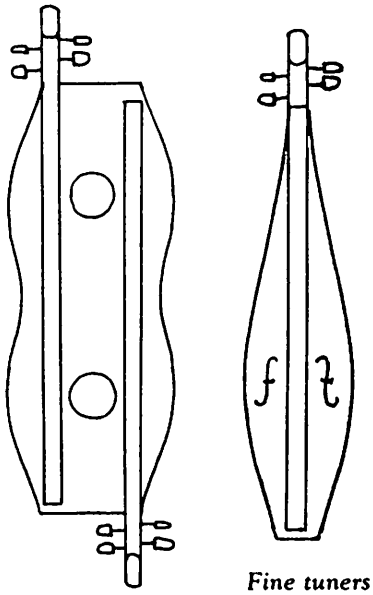
Familiar mostly to audiences in the Southeast, Dan Fraley and Don Dietz are the original core of the Left Hand Dulcimer Band, which at times has included Autoharp, flute and fiddle players. There's nothing unusual about left-handed Don playing his instrument backward, but Dan has two left hands! He smiles as he relates how innocently he began learning the left-handed playing style that gives their sound a hidden subtleness that intrigues audiences with both traditional and contemporary musical tastes.

"The duo first met," Dan explained, "when I hired Don to do some carpenter work on my back porch, and he discovered an old thermos jug that had my old squadron insignia on it. He then remarked, 'I was in that squadron too!' This was in Yuma, Arizona. We were in the same place at the same time and didn't know each other." But once acquainted they discovered interests in common. "Don brought his instrument over to show to me, and I'd never seen a dulcimer in my life. I said, 'Let me try this,' and in about three weeks I'd picked up the basic chords from Don's coaching. It seemed to be fairly easy and I felt like I was accomplishing something, so I stayed with it. I was right-handed but I didn't realize he was showing me left-handed until I already started learning. So I'm stuck! That was seven or eight years ago." Don says that he didn't give Dan much choice but to learn it his way, and a rudimentary Left Hand Dulcimer Band was born.

Don's folk music roots date back to the 60's when he picked up guitar playing and later it developed into rock and roll. He first saw a dulcimer in 1968 and was mystified by it. Five years later an old army buddy built one from a kit, tuned it to Mixolydian, and thought that Don's guitar experience (albeit left-handed)

Appalachian Dulcimers

Hancrafted by Keith K. Young
3815 Kendale Road, Annandale, Virginia 22003
Phone: 703/941-1071



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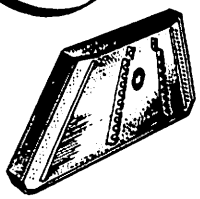

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might qualify him to figure out how to play chords.

As Don explored the newly-constructed mountain dulcimer he was enthralled by the wonderful clarity of tone and liked the fact that it was tuned to an open chord. "Anyway," he says, "it fit nicely in my lap and, being a natural lefty, I pointed the head of the dulcimer to my right. My motor coordination was such that my left hand was used to picking and my right was used to fingering a fret board. It just felt right. So I started searching for chords. The D was easy, and in ten minutes I'd figured out three chord progressions. I was hooked."

During jam sessions, the two new friends borrowed freely from folk tunes of the 60's since they didn't have other dulcimer players around to influence them. Eventually Dan and Don started improvising their own tunes.

They had never heard of using a noter. Their method places the thumb mainly on the bass string rather than the melody string, so the music has a different sound even though it may be in the same key as a tune played by a right-handed individual. The treble strings are away from the body, as they are for a guitar player, so they get the nice rhythm-pluck-strum kind of pattern that backs up most of their songs. The slide work sounds interestingly different. Dan and Don developed a philosophy about the music that says, "Let's do something no one will expect to hear on the dulcimer." It might be Pachelbel's "Canon in D Major" followed by Cindi Lauper's "Time After Time." They didn't begin playing traditional music because there was nothing transposed for left-handed playing and neither of them read music notation anyway. "It's all inside the head," says Don, "and that's all right because it allowed us to evolve in a separate way.

"I'd just say to Dan, 'Try this particular progression,' and he'd pick it up. Eventually he started learning a little bit of lead work, and now he does some things that I don't do well. He's an accomplished bottle neck dulcimer player and that's not something I can do. But I ended up using a pick while Dan uses his fingers, so I can do things like double picking' mandolin style, and our music balances itself out."

The team has been fortunate to play a variety of gigs all over the Southeast. They will drive anywhere within 500 miles for a week-end booking at art shows, museums, church groups, weddings, private parties, colleges, fairs, and for television and radio appearances. Don mentions that in our part of the country it's very hard to get a booking into a club. In bluegrass clubs people want to kick up their heels and buck dance. With some of the music they can. But folks aren't terribly familiar with the mountain dulcimer. Almost everyone you meet in South Alabama says they've never seen one before.

One of their favorite places to perform is at Calloway Gardens, a resort near Columbus, Georgia. They have played there every spring and fall for the last five years during the Azalea and Chrysanthemum Festivals. Sometimes 10,000 people a day come through the park. Dan and Don sit on the porch of a hundred year-old log cabin and share the sweet songs of the dulcimer with visitors. They also played for the 10th anniversary of the PBS television show The Victory Garden filmed at Calloway.

Three years ago they made an album titled simply *Left Hand Dulcimer Band*. It contains all original material and is definitely untraditional with synthesizer back-up. Technically very well done, it received positive responses from fans, but the reviews were mixed. Last year they recorded a cassette tape titled *Rough Cut* which contains Appalachian folk tunes ("Cumberland Gap", "Old Joe Clark") to 50's rock and roll ("Under The Boardwalk") to Beatles ("I've Just Seen A Face") to original materials ("Lizard Leap"). Next time they would like to get picked up by a label, and plans are materializing for a more acoustic album with original, progressive material.

Where do they think their music is going? They would like to perform more out of the Southeast. Don is anxious to get back into songwriting; so is Dan. Both men hope to have more time available to play music this year.

Dan recently sold his picture framing business, and now works for the people who bought it. He is a water color artist, and works 7 or 8 weeks a year for the Alabama State Arts Council program in the public schools. But he chuckles and says that his best work of art is a baby boy named Lucas Lightfoot Fraley, who he expects will become musically inclined as

soon as possible. His wife Sue is interested in music, but she's more interested in cross stitching, he says.

Don is a commercial construction roofing supervisor for a general contractor He writes bids, makes sales, and makes certain that each final job is done properly. Sometimes he dreams of hitting the dulcimer circuit, instead of it just being an avocation.

But Dan remembers how he would *never* have dreamed ten years ago of having an album or of writing songs or even of being able to play an instrument. Matter-of-factly he admits, "I've even branched into banjo playing. I took a right-handed one, removed the 5th string and strung it left-handed!"

If Dan wasn't born with two left hands, he should have been! But Don tosses out a more logical explanation in conclusion: "We're correct handed as opposed to right-handed."

For bookings, record or tapes, contact Left Hand Dulcimer Band, 614 N. 3 Notch St., Troy, AL 36081.

Carol Stober is active in the Birmingham Southern Appalachian Dulcimer Association and is an Alabama Arts Council participating artist. She teaches dulcimer and Autoharp workshops and entertains at festivals and events throughout the US. Her first recording, Patchwork, was released in 1986, and her latest project is an Autoharp instruction cassette and book.

Dear Readers:

This is a large issue for Dulcimer Players News, an increase of 8 pages. It costs more for us to add 4 pages than 8 because of printing press considerations. It is highly likely that the spring DPN will be larger too because of the festival calendar and the (I hope, I hope) organizations directory. I believe we'll have more staff people to introduce before too long. It's hard to keep in touch with you and continue with my performing. I have no intentions of dropping either!

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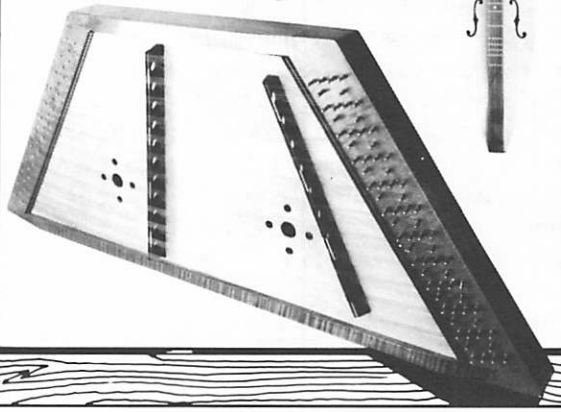

Being Your Own Booking Agent

by Bonnie Carol
Boulder, Colorado

During the early, frustrating years of a musician's career, having a booking agent/manager may seem like heaven. But if that agent isn't motivated or skilled enough to get us out of the $25 a night coffeehouse, booking ourselves is a better answer.

There are many advantages to doing our own booking, whether as a novice or as a seasoned performer. One of them is the personal contact that can be developed with concert promoters. If one can be business-like and gracefully sing one's own praises (as well as gracefully accept rejection), one can represent oneself more accurately and devotedly than anyone else. It has been my experience that many people in the concert promotion business are there because they enjoy meeting musicians and being personally involved in the excitement of producing a show. This personal contact with the artists can generate more interest on their part in making the appearance successful both financially and with the small personal touches of making a comfortable stay.

One requirement of booking ourselves is a fair amount of skill in interpersonal communications. It is important to be entertaining and fun to talk to, as well as business-like, over the telephone. The ability to understand a concert promoter's point of view and needs as well as an artist's needs, and a willingness to strike deals that suit the needs of both parties, are invaluable skills.

One aspect of being an agent that I was not expecting was the vast amounts of time involved in the job. I spend roughly the same amount of time involved in booking-related activity as I do performing, practicing, and traveling to and from jobs all put together.

The first of the major tasks to tackle is identifying the market. Watch performers who play music similar to yours, where they play, what sorts of gigs bring most of their income, who the audiences are, whether there are nearby school programs in which to participate, the existence of a need for workshops in subjects you may be able to teach, and begin to develop identified markets. A friend or another performer willing to share contacts can be especially helpful in exploring an area. My first step in setting up a tour is to call a friend in the area I wish to visit and ask what the current performance scene there is. "Where do people like me play in your town these days?" I ask. "Is the Denver Folklore Center still in existence? Do they still have folk music on Tuesday nights at the rock and roll club on 6th Street? Do you know what the usual guaranteed fee for people like me is? How many people came the last time someone like me played? Are there any summer festivals at which I could play? Are there any radio stations in the area that would play my records? What radio announcer at the stations is doing the folk show these days?"

Expensive, but a most effective method, is to visit an area six months to a year before the time when you wish to come. Visit the schools, coffeehouses, parks, museums, libraries, dulcimer clubs, music stores, chambers of commerce, arts councils and any other arts presenting organization in the area and become acquainted with the person at each location who is most interested in what you can add to their programs. These people can also suggest other avenues in the area which can be explored at this same time. This work can be done less expensively, and possibly a bit less effectively, by telephone, of course.

Other ways to learn of organizations to work for is to read publications such as *Come For To Sing* from Chicago or *Victory Music Review* from the Northwest and see who plays where. Another useful source of contacts is the Chicago-based organization, *Hey Rube!* (P.O. Box 14-6366, Chicago, IL 60614) which addresses itself to many issues facing traditional performers, including health insurance, lost instruments, airline damage to instruments, and gigs. *Hey Rube!* maintains a list of gigs through the country, compiled by and available to members of the organization.

After you've collected enough contacts to begin setting up a tour, you'll need a promotional package. The first item is a professionally typeset brochure describing your music—highlights of your career, recordings or books you may have made, a few places you have played, some favorable quotes from newspapers, and a photo or two. If you have made a record, use it. Whether or not it is listened to, it shows some experience and tenacity in the music business. Many places are hard to get into without a record. Short of a record, a demo tape of three or four songs from a live performance or from a studio is must if you are not known to a promoter. If the tape is from a live performance, include introductory stories and audience reaction to let the promoter know what your rapport with an audience can be. Then add a newspaper clipping or two and a high quality 8x10 black and white glossy photo to your promotional package.

A word about photos. The purpose of the photo is to interest a potential audience through newspaper publicity, and to be used by the promoter to make posters. Because it will be used for reproduction, it must be of high quality to begin with. It should show you and your instruments clearly and artistically on a simple, light background. Once you have one print of an 8x10 black and white glossy, most cities have a commercial photography lab that makes an 8x10 negative from your print, including any written matter you may have typeset to be on the finished copies (such as your name and booking address) and then for a reduced price (perhaps 50¢ or $1 apiece, depending upon the quantity you order) prints 50 or 100 copies at a time. Contact

any seasoned performer or band in your town and find out what the local solution to cheap multiple copies of promo pictures may be.

Armed with your promotional materials, it's time to book a tour. Some performers begin by mailing a brochure and a personal letter to each place they wish to work. Others call each promoter first, and make contact with the person doing the booking, ask a few pertinent questions to determine if this is a possibility, and then tailor a letter to the situation, highlighting points that might be of particular interest, such as workshops you might give or audience groups you could entertain. Send this with a demo tape or record, brochure, and newspaper articles. Save your photos until you have a job. It's quite a bit cheaper to send a brochure to potential jobs than to send a photo to each one. But promoters usually want to know what you look like, so they need some sort of photo in this initial contact.

After a couple of weeks, during which time the promoter has received your materials, listened to your tape, and, we hope, made a decision as to whether to hire you, call to see the reaction. You may have to call several times if the promoter is particularly busy or slow.

If you are hired, a date and fee will be set in this phone call. How much should you ask for? Each situation is different, and the fee is determined by how desirable the gig is to you, how much the promoter wants to hire you, the funds available to the promoter, how many tickets you might be able to sell, your costs in getting to and doing the job, and how seasoned a performer you may be. Some performers have flat fees, relatively non-negotiable; others vary with the particular job.

After the deal is agreed upon, mail two contracts to the promoter. It is important to include in the contract anything you may need to do a good job: PA requirements and microphone needs, location and maps to the job, times and lengths of performances, and agreed financial compensation. Ask the promoter to sign the contacts, keep one, and return one to you. Unfortunately this will not assure that every promoter will have all the PA equipment you have requested, or that the appropriate person will meet you when you go to play for Ms. Miller's 4th grade class, but this will at least let them know what they could do if they are able to meet your needs.

Last, but not least, it is necessary to treat agenting as an ongoing business. As you travel, collect more contacts by reading local newspapers, meeting people and offering to participate in their programs the next time you are in town, and correcting names and addresses as they change in your contact list. The second time you visit a location will probably be more successful than the first, due to your knowledge of how to help promote an appearance in that area, knowing who is the best presenter for you in the area, and having more contacts to draw upon—collected the last time you were there.

Many of the most successful musicians are successful because they have a balanced combination of musical and business skills. Both are challenging and interesting pursuits, and are essential to keeping a musician on the road.

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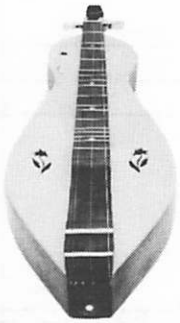

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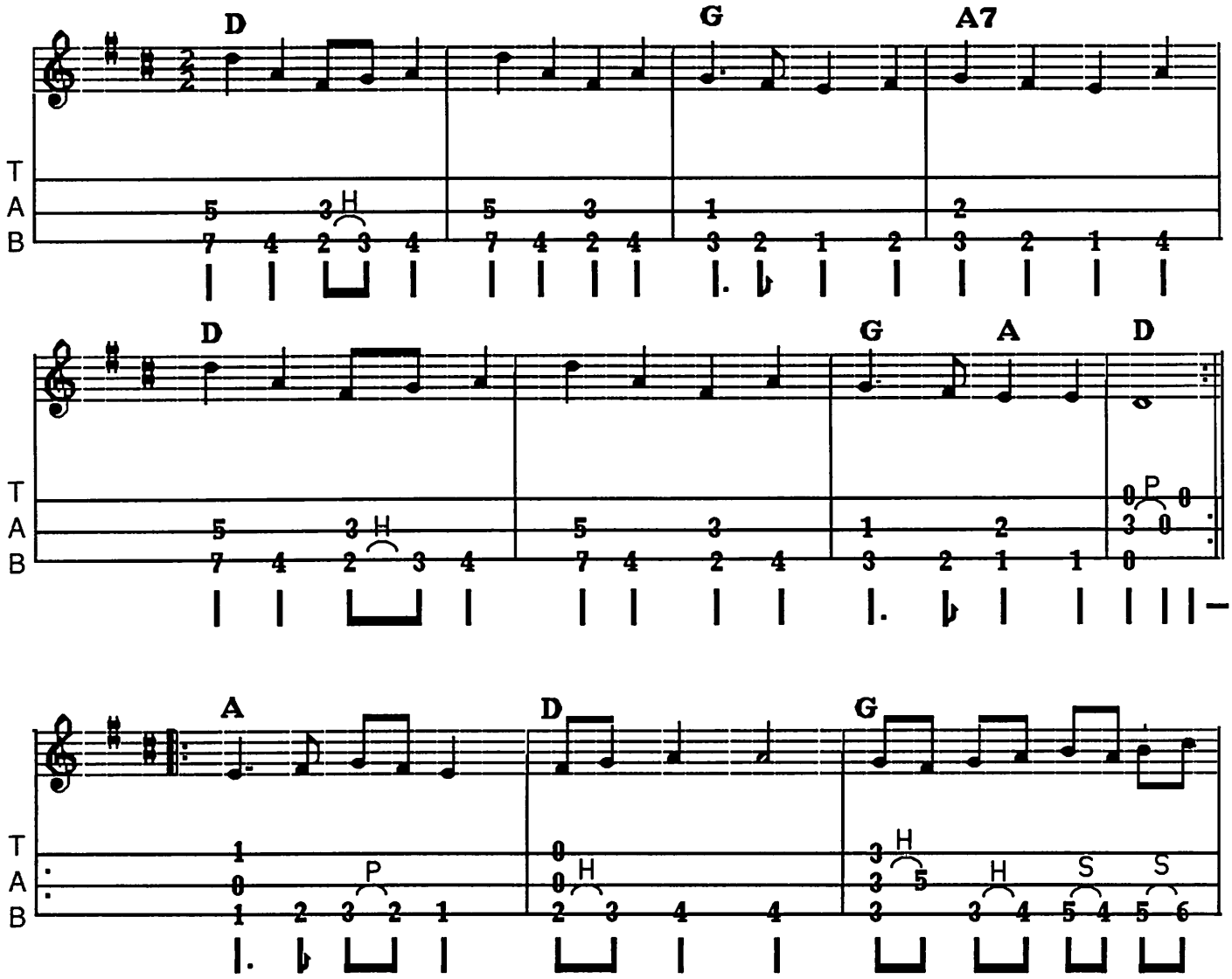
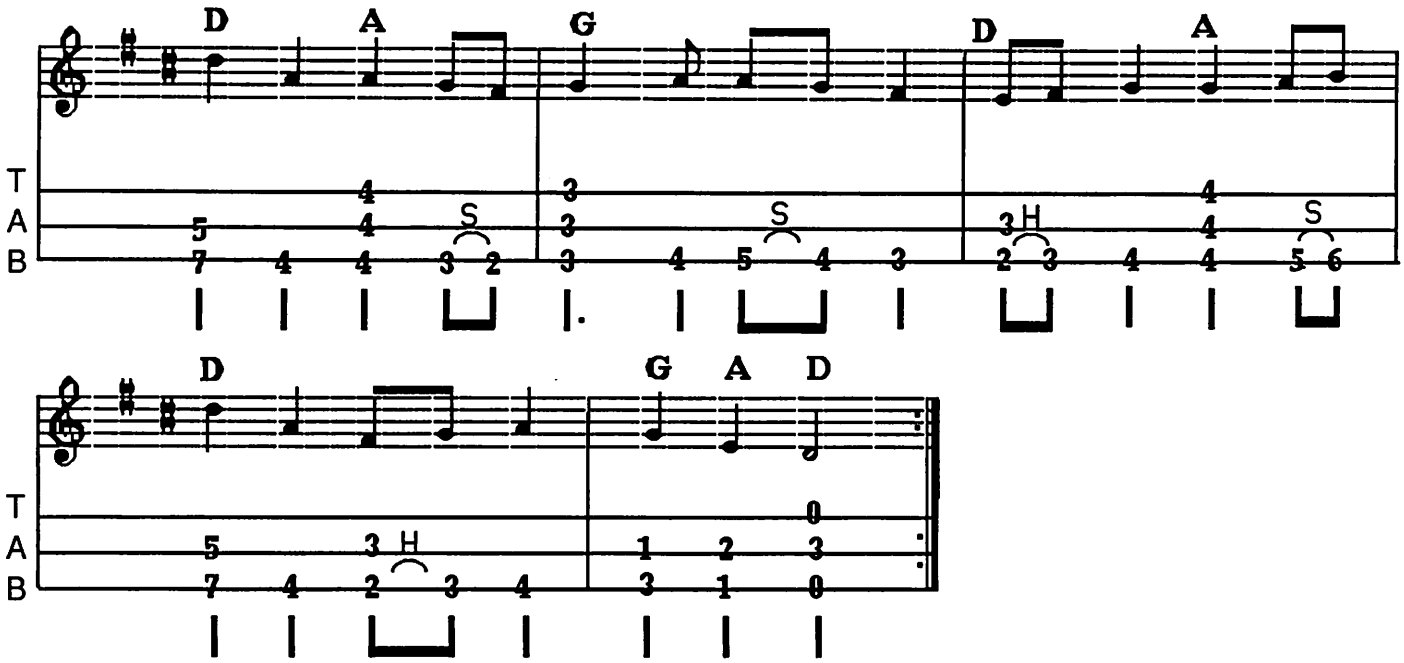
Sally Rogers is known not only for her dulcimer playing but also for her fine singing and songwriting. This is a tune she wrote for Stacy Fall who was the foreman on the farm in Michigan where she grew up. She says, "Stacy taught all of us to fish, to love the out of doors, and was always there when we needed a grown-up (not a Parent) to talk to." Sally recorded this tune on her third solo album, LOVE WILL GUIDE US, on the Flying Fish label.

Sally will be releasing a new children's album on KIDS' RECORDS in the winter . She will also join the ranks of dulcimer players who have published books with HAL LEONARD PUBLICATIONS, when her songbook of original and traditional songs and tunes is released in the spring of 1988.





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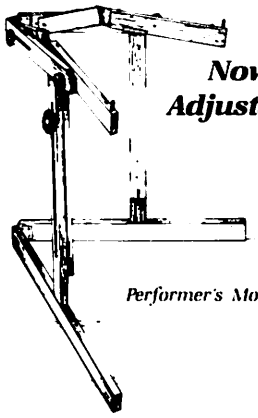

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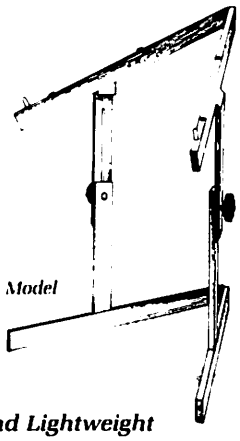

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What's New

Addresses given are those of the individual artists, when available.

Michael Legaré

The Barford Angel/Billy Bennington, The Museum of East Anglian Life, Stowmarket, England (LP) • Billy Bennington died on October 18, 1986, a year after the recordings for this album were made. The name Barford Angel was given to him in Barford because he carried his dulcimer on his back while cycling. The shape of the hammered dulcimer make him look as though he had angel's wings. If DPN readers know of an outlet in the United States for this recording, tell us and we will pass along the information.

Give Me Your Hand/Jeff and Terri Doty, Folklore, Ltd., P.O. Box 2420059, Memphis, TN 38124-2059 (cassette) • Traditional music of the British Isles, Brittany and America performed on bodhran, guitar, harp, keyboards, mountain dulcimer, practice changer, recorder and tin whistle. Four of the fourteen selections are sung.

Season's Greetings/Carole Koenig, 2477 Cheremoya Ave. #102, Hollywood, CA 90068 (cassette) • Christmas music and Renaissance dances performed on hammered dulcimer, violin, percussion and synthesizer.

Closing The Distance/Sally Rogers and Claudia Schmidt, Flying Fish Records, 1304 W. Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614 (LP, cassette) • Vocal duets of traditional and original songs, accompanied by fiddle, bass, fretted dulcimer, pianolin and cello.

The Great Road/Metamora, Sugar Hill Records, (Metamora) P.O. Box 277, Bloomington, IN 47402 (LP, cassette, compact disc) • Original and traditional instrumentals with hammer dulcimer, fiddle, flute, whistle, concertina, guitar, piano and synthesizer.

At Last!/Lucille Reilly, Shadrach Productions, P.O. Box 712c, Moorestown, NJ 08057 (LP) • Dance tunes, classical and popular melodies on hammered dulcimer. Solo pieces, duos and trios with dulcimer, piano, violin and guitar.

Celtic Christmas/Kim Robertson, Invincible, P.O. Box 13054, Phoenix, AZ 85002 (LP, cassette, compact disc) • Instrumental recording featuring Christmas classics played on Celtic harp.

Two Kicking Mule dulcimer recordings, **After The Morning** by Mark Nelson, P.O. Box 799, Talent, OR 97540 and **Christmas Comes Anew** by Madeline MacNeil, P.O. Box 2164, Winchester, VA 22601, are now available on compact disc.

What's New editor is Carrie Crompton, 119 Clover Rd., State College, PA 16801

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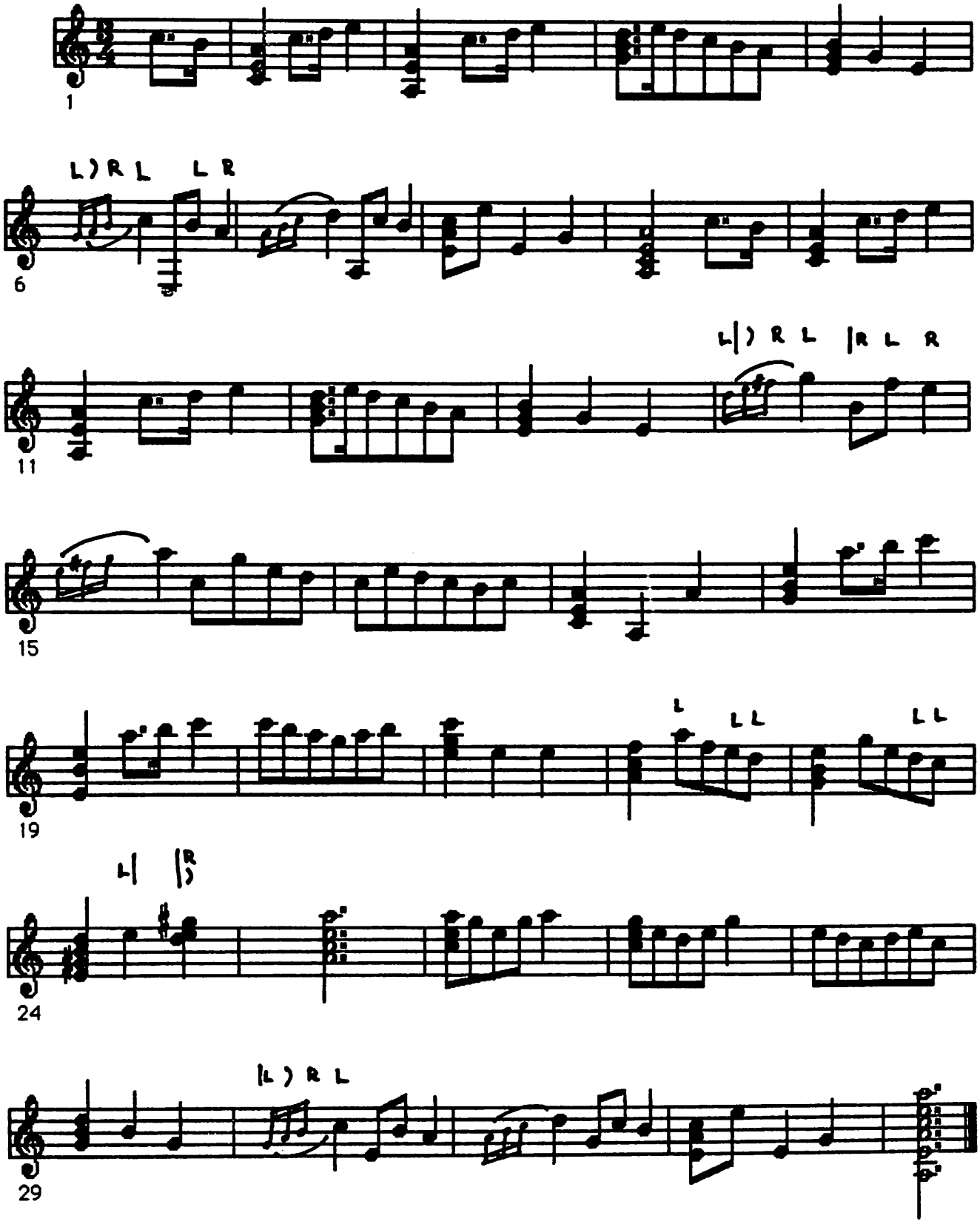
David Cross

Untitled Tune No. 171 (a.k.a. "Carolan's Welcome")

by Turlough O'Carolan

Hammered dulcimer arrangement by Pete Benson

Columbia, Maryland



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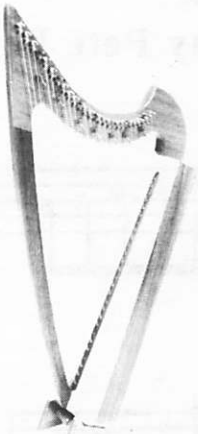

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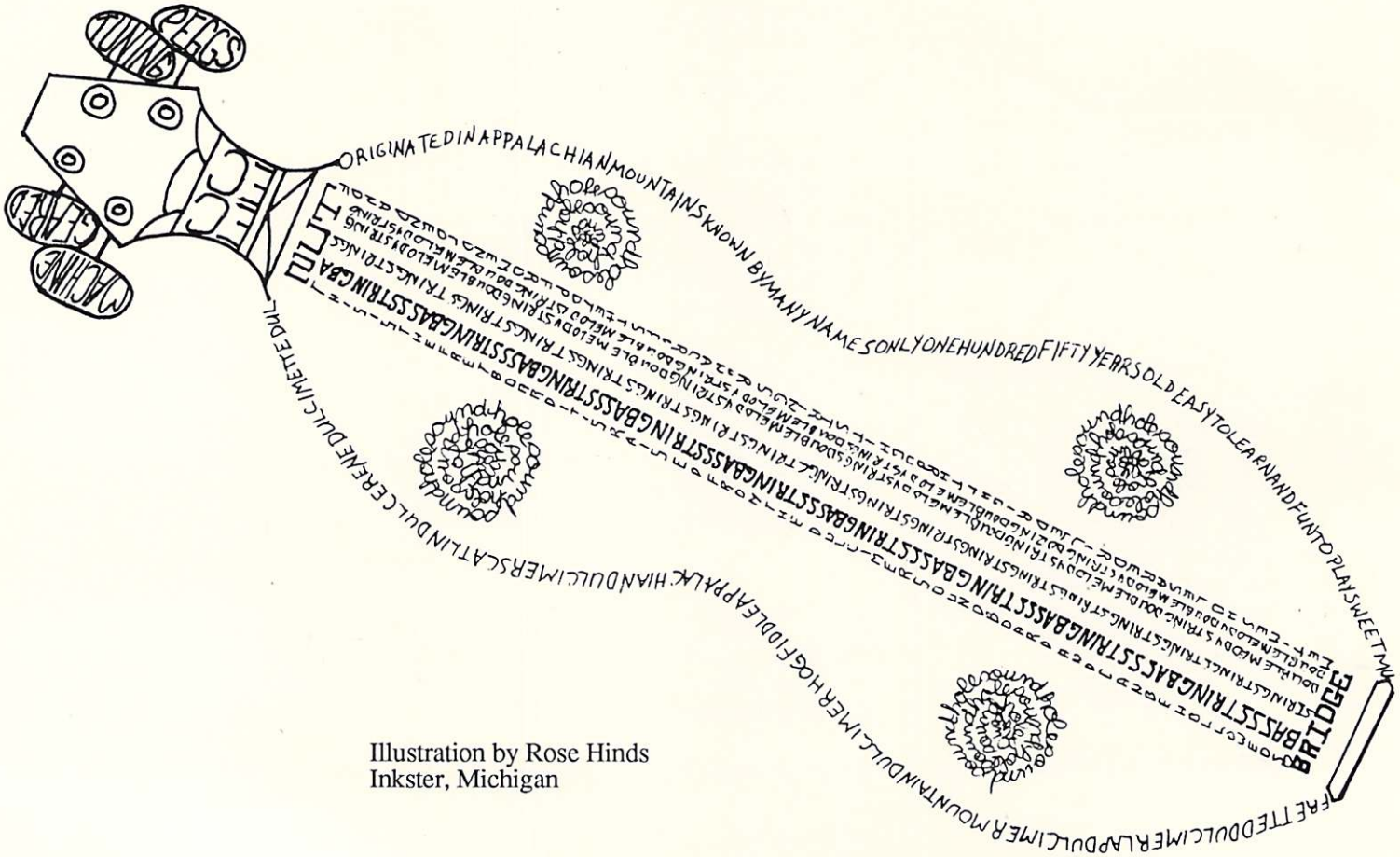

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